the weekly Standard

OCTOBER 29, 2007 • $3.95

While Pakistan Burns

BY DAVEED GARTENSTEIN-ROSS

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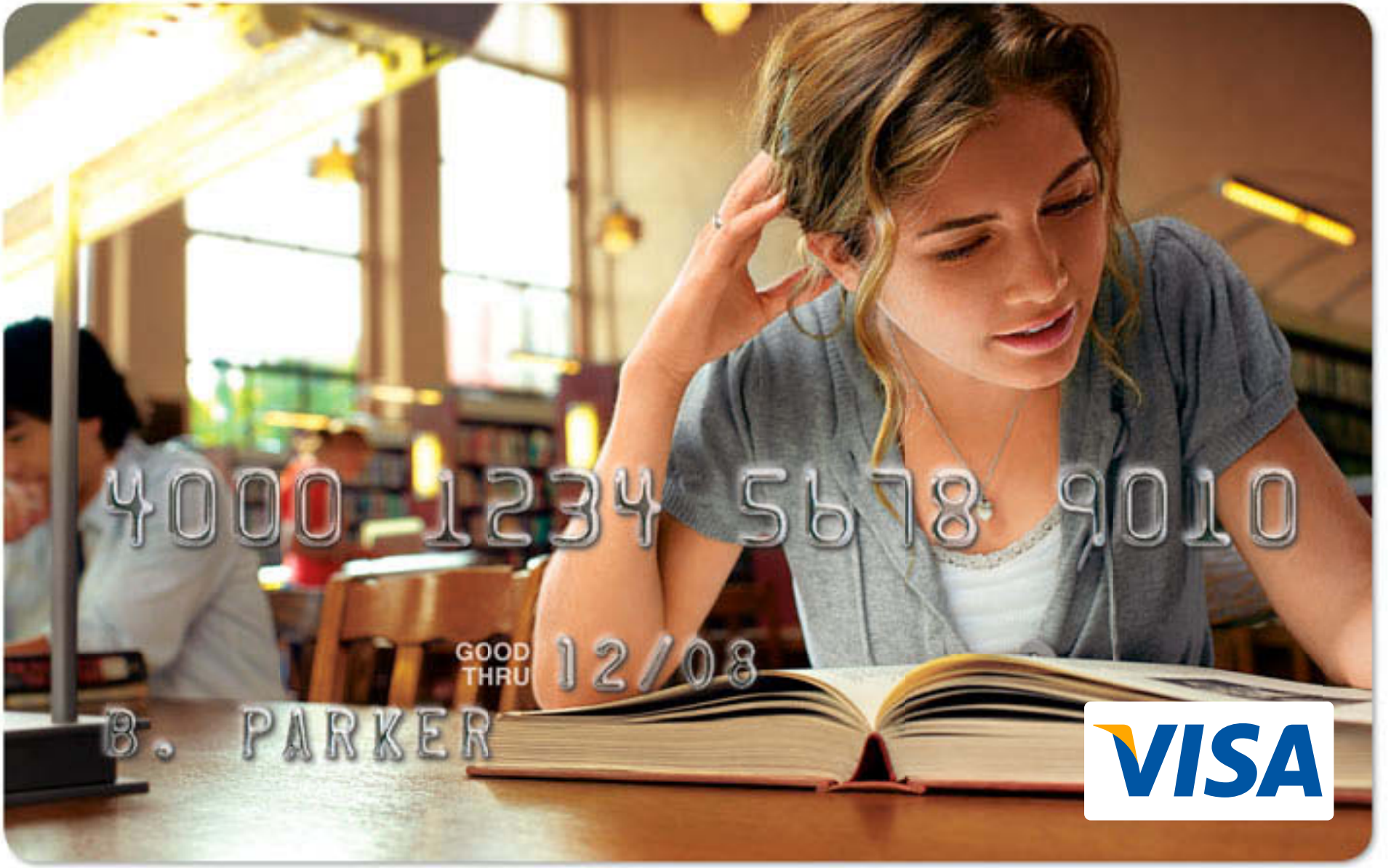

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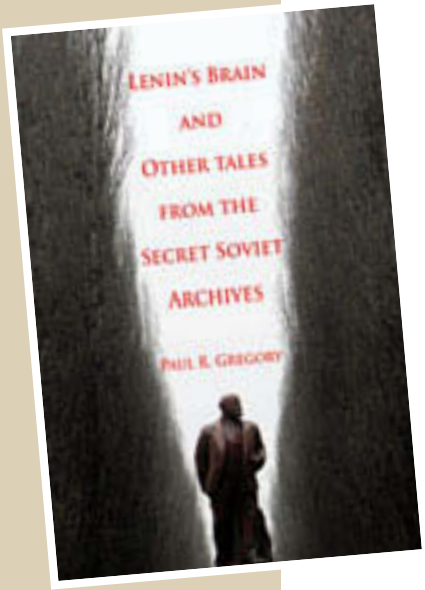

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PAUL R. GREGORY

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Paul R. Gregory, a Hoover Institution research fellow, holds an endowed professorship in the Department of Economics at the University of Houston, Texas, and is a research professor at the German Institute for Economic Research in Berlin.

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Phony Hate Crimes (cont.)

The Scrapbook has a confession to make. We haven't paid much attention to Air America—the hapless attempt to create a successful left-wing talk-radio network from scratch—since its debut in 2004. The key word here is hapless. The *New York Times* may have featured its gestation on the front page for months, and Air America might have featured the talents of Al Franken for hours on end. But the sad truth is that the story for the past three years has been one of incompetence, managerial musical chairs, Chapter 11, and an ever-shrinking audience. If your taste runs to "Go Vegan with Bob Linden," the conspiracy theories of Robert F. Kennedy Jr., and rapper Chuck D (formerly of Public Enemy), then Air America is your network. Even Al Franken jumped ship.

So we were startled to see Air America in the news last week, and doubly startled when we learned the reason. According to Jon Elliott, host of "This is America with Jon Elliott," a fellow Air America gabmeister named Randi Rhodes had been mugged and seriously injured one evening last week outside her Manhattan residence.

"This does not appear to me to be a standard grab-the-money-and-run mugging," said Elliott, clearly distraught. "Is this an attempt by the right-wing hate machine to silence one of our own? Are we threatening them? Are they afraid that we're winning? Are they trying to silence—intimidate—us?" Excellent questions. And before you know it, the left-wing blogosphere was off and running, lamenting the unprovoked attack on Randi Rhodes and pointing out that this "hate crime" had all the earmarks of Karl Rove, or Halliburton, or the Ku Klux Klan, or the folks who gave you Abu Ghraib—and so on and on.

Except for one thing: As Ms. Rhodes's lawyer announced the following day, his client had not been mugged by anyone but was injured in a fall while "walking her dog." Or as Ms. Rhodes herself explained on Air America, "I was watching football in an Irish pub. I went out to smoke a cigarette and the next thing I knew I was down on the cement, face down, bleeding. . . . I don't know if someone hit me from behind, or if I fainted because I hadn't eaten all day." Or as less gallant observers have suggested, maybe she toppled onto the pavement for other reasons—reasons well known to those of us in the pub-frequenting-after-not-eating-all-day community.

How Randi Rhodes came face-to-face with a New York sidewalk is no concern of ours, and, in the spirit of compassionate conservatism, we wish her a speedy recovery. But it tells us something a little startling—maybe even a little pathetic—about the left-wing blogosphere that it clings to such pathological views of our country, and reacts with instant paranoia to political dissent. No wonder Air America now flies below the radar. ♦

Dr. King, They Presumed

A classic correction from the October 18 *New York Times*: "Because of an editing error, an obituary yesterday about the photographer Ernest C. Withers, who documented life in the segregated South in the 1950s and '60s, from the civil rights movement to the Memphis blues scene, misidentified the person he photographed arm in arm with Elvis Presley at a Memphis club in 1956. It was B.B. King, not the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr."

We like to think that had they actually published the historic photo shown here, the *Times* editors would have caught the error before going to press. But you never can be sure. ♦

We two kings: Elvis Presley, "The King of Rock and Roll," with B.B. King, "The King of Blues," Memphis, 1956.

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More of the Same, Piled Higher & Deeper

Everyone who's been sadly putting down the *New York Times* editorial page thinking, "That was great, but one page just isn't enough for me," must be in clover now. The *Times* unveiled a new blog last week called *The Board* (theboard.blogs.nytimes.com). Written by the 19 members of the paper's editorial board, who produce the short, unsigned opinion pieces that grace the paper's editorial page, the blog cleverly offers even more short, unsigned pieces of opinion writing. In its first week, the topics on *The Board* ranged from calling on voters to lobby their representatives to override the president's S-chip veto; to obsessing about torture; to mak-

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(Classic Steiner, reprinted from our issue of November 2, 1998)

ing fun of Condoleezza Rice; to urging reporters to follow "the Karl Rove Connection" to the firing of several U.S. attorneys this past summer; to insisting that Rudy "Giuliani has no right to take sole credit for New York's revival." Oh, they brought up Larry Craig, too.

It's difficult to see how *The Board* differs from, say, the *New York Times* editorial page. Oh, wait, there is one difference: *The Board* hosts a comments section, leading to gems like this one from "Garbanzo": "Not to question your collective work ethic, but 19 board members = 2 editorials per day x 7 days per week. Each board member has to write but one editorial per week? Where can I sign up for this job? Is this a full-time gig?"

Only in New York, Garbanzo, only in New York. ♦

Alan Jacobs Does Kahlil Gibran

Kahlil who? our younger readers may ask. But older readers will remember, as The Scrapbook shudders to remember, what it was like to go to a certain kind of wedding in the 1970s, where the only thing wider than the lapels on the groom's powder-blue tux were his exuberant sideburns, and where either just before or just after the flute soloist played "Color My World" came the reading from Kahlil Gibran.

Invariably it was the passage from *The Prophet*, his most popular book, which purported to be about marriage while actually green-lighting infidelity (no doubt explaining why the hippies revived this minor literary figure from the 1920s): "Love one another, but make not a bond of love: let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of your souls. Fill each other's cup but drink not from one cup. Give one another of your bread but eat not from the same loaf. . . ."

When a Gibran memorial was built in Washington a few years ago, the late poet Anthony Hecht spoke for many of us: "He writes sentimental, corny, sloppy, semi-erotic, tasteless but popular stuff. Of course, to be popular, one doesn't have to be good. They're almost mutually exclusive."

This reminiscence is occasioned by the appearance of a brilliant parody in the new issue of *First Things* by Alan Jacobs. A taste:

Expansive and yet vacuous is the prose of Kahlil Gibran,
And weary grows the mind doomed to read it.
The hours of my penance lengthen,
The penance established for me by the editor of this magazine,
And those hours may be numbered as the sands of the desert.
And for each of them Kahlil Gibran has prepared
Another ornamental phrase,
Another faux-Biblical cadence,
Another affirmation proverbial in its intent
But alas! lacking the moral substance,
The peasant shrewdness, of the true proverb.

As they say, you'll want to read the whole thing. Hie thee to a newsstand and get the latest *First Things*. ♦

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Casual

Excellent Choice

Many years ago I gave the Mencken Day lecture at the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore. After my lecture, a man in his late seventies, possibly early eighties, came up to tell me that he knew H.L. Mencken. He then drew out of a battered briefcase a small light brown frame, in which, tapped out on an old-fashioned typewriter, was a letter from Mencken himself. The letter went something like this:

"Dear Phil, I want to thank you for being so good a bartender all these years at the Rennert Hotel. You have always done your job with tact and craft, and I admire a man who brings these qualities to his work, no matter what a man's job is. Sincerely, Henry Louis Mencken."

I thought about that letter the other night at a restaurant called the Chicago Firehouse, lodged in a converted firehouse built in 1905, in the city's south Loop neighborhood. I had not been to the restaurant before. The rooms were decorated in a calm and understated way, and there wasn't any of that din that contemporary restaurants seem to feel gives customers a go-go feeling of success. The people already seated seemed serious feeders, not there for status or other non-gustatory purposes.

Once seated, my wife and I and the couple we were with felt the air-conditioning too high and the music too loud. After our waitress, a tall woman, heavyset, blonde, in small glasses and wearing a white jacket, took our drink orders, I asked if she could do something about the air-conditioning and the music. She said she would, and straightaway did. A promising start.

My wife ordered a glass of Riesling, and when the waitress brought our drinks, she poured a small amount of the Riesling for my wife to taste and also, in a second glass, a small amount of another wine, a combination of Riesling, Gewurstraminer, Muscat, and Chardonnay, that she thought my wife might like even more. Which, it turned out, she did, a lot. We were, obviously, in the hands of someone who knew her business.

Before we ordered our dinners, this waitress answered such questions as we had with a no-nonsense precision and authority. Presently our dishes were gently slid before us. Our waitress returned to our table once to ask if everything was as we wished; and a second time to refill my wife's wine glass. She and I exchanged brief stories about wine snobbery. She set down menus for dessert, on which we all passed, but we did have coffee, over which we lingered. When she left the check, I, grateful for the professional quality of her service, tipped her 25 percent. If I'd been Mencken, I would have returned home to write this woman a letter of the kind he wrote to Phil, the bartender at the Rennert.

Two days later, I met a friend for lunch at another restaurant. I was five minutes late, and when I asked the maitre d' if my friend had arrived, he said, "Yes, and he anxiously awaits your presence." What crap, I thought to myself, and by the way, chum, he "eagerly," not "anxiously," awaits me. If you can't tell the truth, at least get your usage right.

The waiter, a young man with spiky hair and rather a sad, wispy beard, reporting the special dishes of the day to us, paused to cite one of them as "my own favorite." I saw my friend's jaw muscles tighten. After the waiter left, he said, "I can't tell you how much I hate that 'my own favorite' stuff." "Be grateful," I said, "that he didn't tell us that we made excellent choices or ordered very intelligently." Four or five times, this waiter broke into our conversation to ask if everything was okay. Which it was until he broke in to ask.

DARREN GYGI

Today most waiters, middle and upper-middle class young hoping to be actors or screenwriters or Bill Gates, are merely passing through. The number of professional waiters has become fewer and fewer. These old-line waiters and waitresses didn't see themselves as the equals of the people they were serving; some among them—one thinks of the old contemptuous waiters in Jewish delis who seemed to take especial pleasure in throwing their customers a bit off stride—may well have thought themselves superior to their customers. But they understood that democracy hasn't anything to do with dining out.

No one requires a waiter to mention that he himself just ate the food one is about to eat. Or that he thinks one a man of distinction for ordering the mussels. Or that the desserts in the joint are "to die for." One doesn't want, in short, to be waited on by someone who comes on as if he were one's nephew, the one whose mother recently told you that she was now certain he was never going to take hold and amount to anything. Your entrée may have been an excellent choice, but his becoming a waiter, clearly, wasn't.

Joseph Epstein

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the weekly Standard

Epitaph for a Congress

Perhaps the Democratic sweep in last November's elections was providential. Consider what might have happened if Republicans had suffered setbacks on November 7, 2006, but had narrowly maintained control of Congress.

The political situation facing the Bush administration would have seemed less dire. Those pushing for a new strategy in Iraq and a surge of troops might well have failed to convince the administration to embrace such a radical change. Shaky Republicans in Congress, terrified by the close call, would have been adamant that we begin to draw down in Iraq. The report of the Iraq Study Group would have fallen on the desperately receptive ears of congressional Republicans ("we barely held on and we'd better do something") and on equally receptive disappointed-but-emboldened-Democratic ones. The 110th Congress would then have insisted, with a bipartisan flourish, on an establishment-sanctioned middle way that was, in fact, a disguised path to defeat. Bush would have had a difficult time resisting pressure from a Republican or partly Republican Congress. And we would now be facing an utter debacle in the heart of the Middle East.

Instead, the GOP lost both houses. Having little left to lose, Bush defied conventional wisdom, changed commanders and strategy, and went for the surge. He was able to hold Republicans together and beat back a series of partisan assaults from the Democratic Congress, starting in January and continuing into September. He was able to buy time until the new strategy backed by more troops began to work.

The most comical evidence of the surge's success was the story on the antiwar McClatchy Newspapers wire last Tuesday, "As violence falls in Iraq, cemetery workers feel the pinch." As the astute observers at the *Powerline* blog put it, "This is one of those headlines you couldn't make up."

Jay Price of the *Raleigh News & Observer* and Qasim Zein of McClatchy Newspapers (along with McClatchy special correspondents Janab Hussein, Hussein Kadhim, and Sahar Issa—it was a major story!) reported the sad news:

> At what's believed to be the world's largest cemetery, where Shiite Muslims aspire to be buried and millions already have been, business isn't good. A drop in violence around Iraq has cut burials in the huge Wadi al Salam cemetery here by at least one-third in the past six months, and that's cut the pay of thousands of workers who make their living digging graves, washing corpses or selling burial shrouds.

A loss of income for cemetery workers due to a decline in violence! Clearly an injustice for the Democratic Congress to address. But first, on Thursday, they had to try to override President Bush's veto of their cherished middle-class children's insurance bill. Bush's veto was about to be sustained when senior Democratic congressman Pete Stark, from the San Francisco Bay area, took to the floor of the House:

> You don't have money to fund the war or children. But you're going to spend it to blow up innocent people, if we can get enough kids to grow old enough for you to send to Iraq to get their heads blown off for the president's amusement.

So U.S. troops in Iraq are just "blow[ing] up innocent people," and the president is sending those troops there "to get their heads blown off" for his "amusement"? Whenever you think congressional Democrats can sink no lower, they prove you wrong. Twenty-four hours later, Democratic leaders had yet to chastise their 18-term colleague. Stark refused to apologize, but he did say he respected the troops.

So does Hillary Clinton. But last month, over on the Senate side, she couldn't resist impugning the integrity of General David Petraeus as he testified to the Senate Armed Services Committee. Clinton said Petraeus's testimony required a "willing suspension of disbelief." That is, contrary to all evidence, Clinton accused the commanding general of U.S. troops in Iraq of misleading the American people.

All of this followed by several months the defining statement of the 110th Congress: Harry Reid's assertion, this past April 19, "This war is lost." History may well record that statement as the epitaph for the 110th Congress, and the party that led it. The Democrats engaged in endless efforts to make sure the war really was lost. They failed. Now it looks as if the war, despite the Democratic Congress's best efforts, may well be won. It's the congressional Democrats who are the losers. And so could be the 2008 Democratic presidential nominee. Are the American people likely to elect the candidate of a party that has tried its best to lose a winnable war?

—*William Kristol*

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Oslo Syndrome

The Nobel Peace Prize ain't what it used to be

BY PHILIP TERZIAN

Visit the Virginia Military Institute, in Lexington, and cadets will show you the statue of General George C. Marshall '01 on the edge of the parade ground, and add proudly that Marshall was (and remains) the only soldier ever to win the Nobel Peace Prize (1953). They do this partly because Marshall is VMI's most illustrious graduate, but largely because the prize, when Marshall won it, carried with it a significance and prestige that no longer obtains.

This was painfully obvious last week, when Albert Arnold (Al) Gore Jr.—as the Nobel committee punctiliously identifies him—was awarded this year's Nobel Peace Prize, in conjunction with the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. As if to demonstrate how the foreign press seldom comprehends American politics, the *Financial Times* of London led the weekend edition with a breathless account of Gore's triumph, headlined "Gore Prize Transforms Debate on Climate."

> Al Gore's winning of the Nobel Peace Prize yesterday for his work on climate change is likely to place the issue at the forefront of political debate in the US as the country moves into its presidential election season.
>
> The award, which the former vice-president shares with the United Nations' body of climate experts, follows speculation about a Gore presidential bid.

Up to a point, *FT*. As it happens, there is no evidence whatsoever that Al Gore's Nobel Peace Prize has had any effect at all on the 2008 Democratic or Republican presidential campaigns, and, according to polls, Democratic voters remain resolutely uninterested in a potential Gore candidacy. Indeed, the laureate himself, who had been coy on the subject, took the occasion to repeat his intention not to seek the presidency next year.

Gore could still change his mind, of course, and global warming might be mentioned at one of those televised debates. But it is symptomatic of the depths to which the Nobel Prize has sunk that its impact this year, such as it is, was inspired by a movie (*An Inconvenient Truth*) and confined to one phase of U.S. presidential politics. No doubt, a glow will emanate from Gore's capacious skull, and he will savor the ceremony in Oslo and the big gold medal with the profile of Alfred Nobel. But, as if we didn't already know, the Nobel Peace Prize ain't what it used to be.

The problem is that the Nobel Peace Prize, endowed by the conscience-stricken inventor of dynamite, has always had a slightly ambiguous quality about it—unlike, say, the prizes in physics or medicine, even literature.

For many years, it functioned as a kind of gold watch for elder statesmen: the American Elihu Root (1912), Aristide Briand (1926) of France, Britain's stalwart League of Nations advocate Lord Robert Cecil (1937), the Canadian Lester Pearson (1957). There was the occasional miscalculation, of course: The American secretary of state Frank Kellogg (1929) won for his pact, coauthored with the aforementioned Briand, outlawing war as an instrument of national policy—just one decade before the Nazi invasion of Poland. North Vietnam's Le Duc Tho (1973) shared the honors for peace in Indochina, as did Yasser Arafat (1994) for peace in the Middle East. But the prize customarily went to benevolent politicians—Woodrow Wilson (1919), Gustav Stresemann (1926), Cordell Hull (1945)—to well-intentioned people—Jane Addams (1931), Ralph Bunche (1950), Albert Schweitzer (1952)—and to humanitarian orga-

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Philip Terzian is the literary editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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nizations—International Committee of the Red Cross (1944 and 1963), U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (1954 and 1981), Doctors Without Borders (1999).

In the past few decades, however, the Nobel Peace Prize has developed a certain political edge. The process might be said to have begun in 1962, when it was awarded to the 1954 chemistry laureate, the American Linus Pauling, whose anti-nuclear pronouncements were usually directed, with considerable heat, toward his own government. In some instances the committee has aimed its arrow at a proper target—Andrei Sakharov (1975), Lech Walesa (1983), the Dalai Lama (1989), Aung San Suu Kyi (1991)—but such lucky shots have grown increasingly rare.

In 1985, for example, the prize was awarded to International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, a coalition of American and Soviet "peace activists" highly critical of the Reagan administration but notably silent on the use, in the Soviet Union, of psychiatric hospitals to silence political dissidents. The 1987 award to Costa Rica's president Oscar Arias Sánchez was an evident endorsement of the now-forgotten Arias Plan to thwart U.S. efforts against Communist insurgencies in Central America. The 1992 prize to Guatemala's Rigoberta Menchú was not only recognition for "ethno-cultural reconciliation based on respect for the rights of indigenous peoples"—in the delightful language of the committee—but reward for a reliable critic of the United States and author of a (as was later discovered) fictitious autobiography.

To be sure, hostility toward the United States does not always govern the choices of the Nobel Committee. But while it is impossible to find a modern laureate who could, in any reasonable way, be identified with American foreign policy, it is easy to find critics and adversaries. This includes American winners—Jody Williams (1997) of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines—and even onetime U.S. officials, such as Al Gore and Jimmy Carter (2002), whose public opposition to George W. Bush seems to have been decisive in Oslo.

Undoubtedly, the most egregious example was the award of the prize, in 1990, to Mikhail Gorbachev "for his leading role in the peace process which today characterizes important parts of the international community." It may be difficult to comprehend what, exactly, the committee was saying here, but the fact that 1990 was the first year in which it felt obliged to furnish a citation suggests that, even in Oslo, the exclusion of Ronald Reagan required an explanation.

Which brings us to the ambiguity of the Nobel Peace Prize itself. Certainly, it is right and proper to recognize and reward humanitarians, and people who resist oppression at cost to themselves. But what is the promotion of peace, anyway? Is it the pronouncement of words and the striking of attitudes, or the action that guarantees freedom against tyranny? Secretary of State Marshall was awarded the prize for his eponymous plan which assisted the postwar European recovery. But a stronger case could be made for another Nobel Peace Prize for General Marshall as the "organizer of victory" against Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan. ♦

MICHAEL RAMIREZ

LEAKS

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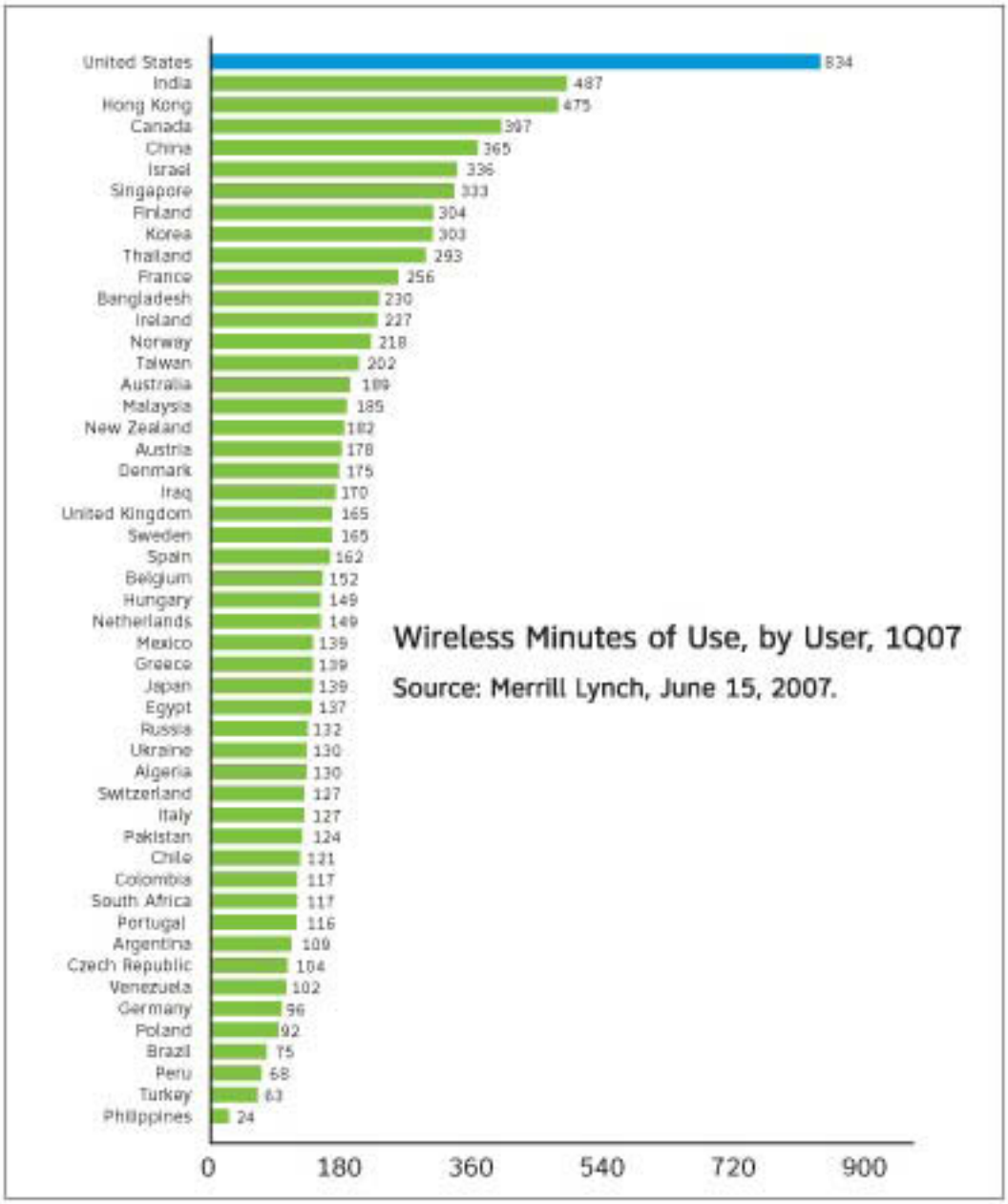

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The Roads Not Taken

How we narrowly avoided defeat in Iraq.

BY FRED BARNES

Last February, Senator Hillary Clinton proposed to cap the number of American troops in Iraq at their level on January 1, 2007—roughly 140,000—and begin a withdrawal within 90 days.

The purpose of her bill was stated in section 2:

> If the President follows the provisions of this Act, the United States should be able to complete a redeployment of United States troops from Iraq by the end of the current term in office of the President.

That wasn't all Clinton had in mind. Should the Bush administration and the Iraqi government fail to meet "certain conditions" within 90 days, American troops would no longer be authorized to stay in Iraq. Clinton's conditions were tough and sweeping, including the convening of a conference on Iraq to "involve the international community and Iraq's neighbors" and the stripping of "sectarian and militia influences" from Iraqi security forces.

The Clinton measure was never voted on. But it contained the major elements—a troop drawdown, emphasis on diplomacy, pressure on the Iraqi government—of the "responsible" strategy for salvaging American interests now that the war in Iraq had been lost. At least that's how Democrats, liberals, more than a few Republicans, the foreign policy establishment, most of the media, and a majority of Americans questioned by pollsters saw the situation.

Now imagine if the Clinton plan had become law. Nine months after she submitted her bill, we can speculate about what it would have produced. Sectarian violence would probably have exploded, al Qaeda would have been left with a large, secure sanctuary west of Baghdad, Iranian interference in Iraq would have increased, the prospects for democracy and stability would have dimmed. And that's just for starters.

We don't have to speculate, however, about what Clinton would have prevented. That's not a matter of guesswork. The successes from deploying more American troops in Iraq and taking up the counterinsurgency strategy of General David Petraeus, the U.S. commander in Iraq, would not have occurred. If Clinton had prevailed, the surge would have been impossible.

The same is true for practically every other proposal considered by the Democratic Congress on Iraq. Whatever the goal of the "responsible" plans—to end the war quickly, set a timetable for troop reductions, remove American troops from a combat role, focus the American effort solely on training the Iraqi army, make deployment of troops to Iraq more difficult, cut funding—the effect would have been to preclude the surge.

Like Clinton's bill, the "responsible" proposals were all based on the premise that the war in Iraq was lost. Now, the surge is proving that premise wrong. But had any of the proposals been enacted, we wouldn't have known this. We wouldn't have discovered the war is winnable and indeed now is being won, thanks to the surge.

What has the surge achieved? Al Qaeda is on the run in Iraq. The Sunni insurgency is rapidly waning. Sunni sheikhs have joined with American forces. More recently, Shia sheikhs have helped American troops to suppress the Mahdi Army of Moktada al-Sadr, the pro-Iranian mullah. Political reconciliation is stirring in the Iraqi provinces as sectarian turmoil eases. Oil revenues are being shared. Civilian and U.S. military deaths have fallen sharply. Iraq is less violent, more stable. These accomplishments are directly or indirectly attributable to the surge.

The surge involved three steps. The first was to secure Anbar province, declared hopelessly hostile territory by the American military in 2006 but by early this year the scene of a Sunni rebellion against al Qaeda. The second step was to take over the belt around Baghdad—exurbs, really—from which al Qaeda equipped and dispatched suicide bombers, many coming from Anbar, to Baghdad and other cities. The third was pacifying Baghdad itself.

Last fall, the idea of sending troops to Anbar and leaving them to provide security for Iraqi citizens was debated inside the Bush administration. There was strong sentiment to focus on Baghdad alone. But Steve Hadley, Bush's national security adviser, favored an alliance with the Sunni sheikhs in Anbar and urged the president to include Anbar in the new secure-and-hold strategy. Bush agreed and in his nationally televised speech last January specifically noted that 4,000 more troops would be sent to Anbar.

Had Clinton's or any of the other "responsible" plans for phasing out or downgrading the American military's role in Iraq been adopted, even this small step of seizing Anbar would have been impossible. And so would subsequent efforts to secure other provinces where al Qaeda and insurgents were strong, and to stabilize Baghdad.

Let's look back at three of those plans. Last March, the Senate voted on Majority Leader Harry Reid's bill to force Bush to begin pulling troops out of Iraq within 120 days—by early July. That, of course, was precisely when the last of the 20,000-plus new

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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troops—the surge troops—would just have arrived in Iraq.

If Reid's measure had passed, either the new troops or other units would have had to depart Iraq immediately, with more withdrawals to follow. And the counterinsurgency strategy would have been a nonstarter. There wouldn't have been enough troops to carry it out. Without the increase, American troops would not have been able to protect Iraqi citizens while keeping al Qaeda and insurgents from finding safe havens.

So Reid's plan would have killed any chance to employ a new strategy that might reverse the course of the war, as the surge has. And that was Reid's intention.

The Iraq Study Group headed by James A. Baker III and Lee Hamilton had a different approach. It devoted a single sentence to a possible troop increase in Iraq in its 84-page report last December. The ISG could "support a short-term redeployment or surge of American combat forces to stabilize Baghdad, or to speed up the training and equipping mission, if the U.S. commander in Iraq determines that such steps would be effective." But that was a throwaway line, not a recommendation. The ISG didn't advocate a surge strategy.

On the contrary, the ISG concluded that "the long-term deployment of U.S. troops by itself" wouldn't improve security in Iraq. Already, 10 months after the ISG report was issued, the short-term surge has proved that notion to be false. Security in Iraq has unquestionably improved. The ISG favored embedding American troops in Iraqi units rather than having U.S. units serve alongside Iraqi brigades, as the surge called for. Again, the progress achieved by the surge, with American brigades in a combat role, indicates the ISG was wrong.

Democratic representative John Murtha of Pennsylvania, the chief critic of the war in the House, took another tack. He wanted to require military units to reach the highest level of readiness before being sent to Iraq, a level rarely achieved even in peacetime. This was the "slow bleed" strategy and would have delayed deployments and made the surge difficult and probably impossible to implement.

But Murtha, like Clinton, wanted to pull troops out of Iraq, not make it easier to send them in. Last week, I asked Mark Penn, the chief strategist for Clinton's presidential campaign, if she still favored withdrawing troops now that the surge is working. Oh, yes, Penn said. Clinton is as "committed" as ever to removing troops from Iraq. What about the surge? Clinton is still against that, too. ♦

YouTube U.

Now you can sleep through lectures in the comfort of your own home. BY ANDY KESSLER

Without much fanfare, college lectures are being put online, for free. MIT lectures can be downloaded from iTunes University, and you can watch Cal professors pontificate on your computer via YouTube. Is this some new trend? Do colleges feel threatened by Wikipedia? Something funny is going on. No one gives anything away for free without some ulterior motive.

I mean, don't they know college is big business? Right now, 17 million students are involved in higher education, some higher than others. As a business, college is growing faster than sales of multicolored Crocs. Since 1980, the population of students under 25 has grown 40 percent—and for those over 25, it's up even more at 52 percent. Is this what your neighbors are doing during the day? Could be. Even better (for colleges, anyway), since 2002 tuition has jumped 35 percent in real terms (that's adjusted for inflation, for you French-lit majors). And while financial aid is available, there is some $85 billion in student loans outstanding. Who is going to break the news to these kids that they could have bought a Mustang and watched that physics class for free on their laptop between shifts at Dunkin Donuts (which isn't even spelt right)?

Has anyone thought through this whole free lectures thing? If they give this stuff away on the Internet, doesn't that completely change the economics and bring the faux-Greek revival columns holding up lecture halls crashing down onto quads/Frisbee football fields across America?

Maybe not. I've now listened to and watched what seemed a semester's worth of lectures, and they induced flashbacks to my permanent seat in the back row fighting off the head whips at 8 A.M. on a Friday morning after dime beer night at the Fall Creek House. I got smarter by the nanosecond trying to decipher the words as MIT's Gang Chen rambled on about Nanoscale Transport, dreamed of Gandhi during Cal's PACS 164B: Introduction to Nonviolence, and learned how to watch prime time detective shows during USC law professor Jody Armour's discussion of premeditated murder.

YouTube will tell you how many times these lectures have been watched, and so far viewership is less than a comparative religion class at Riyadh U. Harvard's $45,620/year assembly line is not yet at risk.

But something funky is going on. Let's test your recall of the transitive property. Lectures are free, college requires lectures, therefore college is worthless. Makes sense. But of course, college isn't worthless, not if you ever want to get a job. The lectures may

Andy Kessler's most recent book is The End of Medicine: How Silicon Valley (and Naked Mice) Will Reboot Your Doctor.

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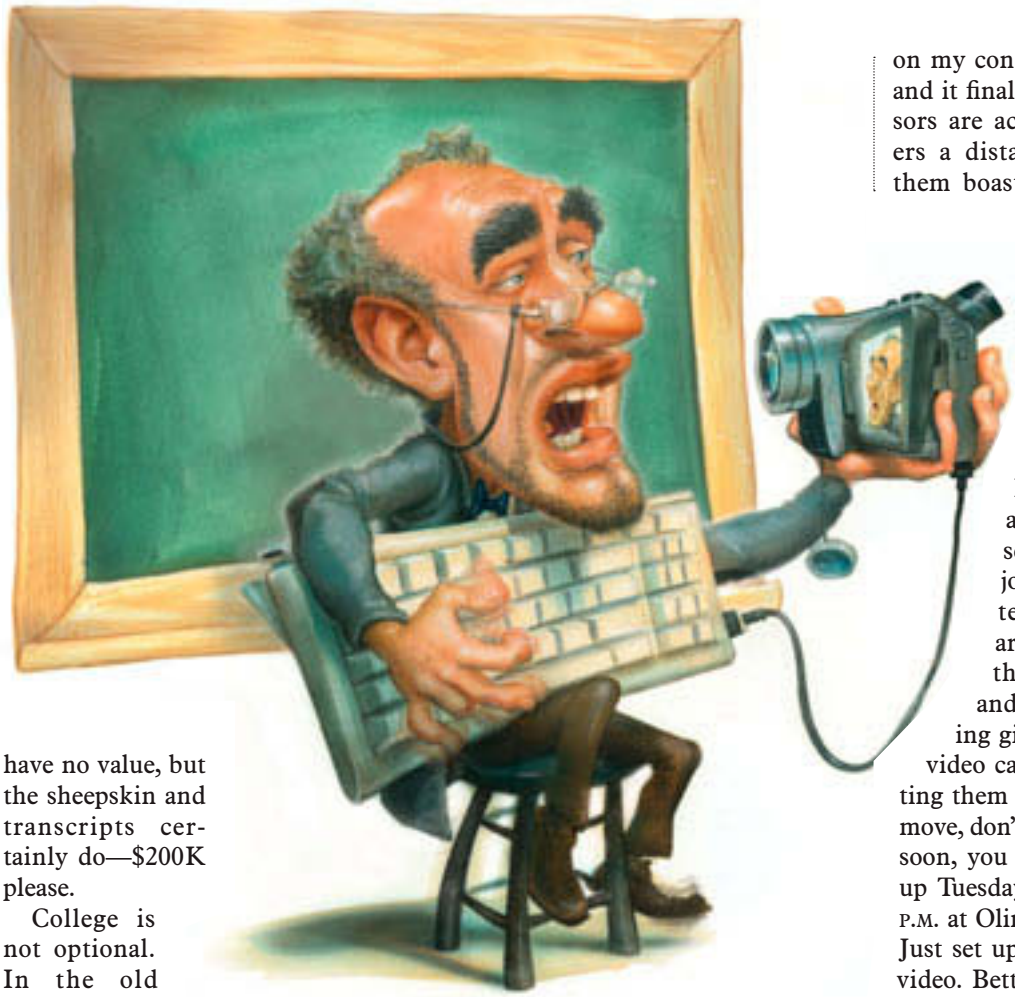

GARY LOCKE

have no value, but the sheepskin and transcripts certainly do—$200K please.

College is not optional. In the old days, college was the ticket out of the grimy Pennsylvania town and a certain life toiling in the steel mills—if you looked like Tom Cruise and could throw a football and make all the right moves. Today, it's a tortuous branding exercise to prove that you're too smart to wear a funny hat and offer to supersize those fries, but instead are deserving enough to sit in a cubicle and set up two-tier marketing promotions, which as far as I can tell are some bizarre mutation of supersizing (I couldn't find any marketing lectures online). But let's agree—college is anything but worthless. In our knowledge economy, it's your ticket to the job dance. So maybe you can give away the content, but without the proof of purchase diploma, no tango.

Or maybe, just maybe, something else is going on. Perhaps academics have finally gotten hip. They are surrounded by kids all day, a little bit of hipness is bound to rub off. Maybe these free lectures are just promotional materials. Try it in the comfort of your own home. If you like what you see, come drop 200 grand for the real deal.

It's what MTV used to be and YouTube is today. The videos promote music (which kids rip off anyway), and the band makes its profits touring cities and, hmm, college campuses selling overpriced concert tickets and soon-to-fade T-shirts in the lobby. And I've got to admit, these lectures are very much like Madonna or Jay-Z videos: They are confusing and completely unwatchable. No plot, lame visuals, talentless ranting. A little more skin and some better dance moves and professors would be the new role models in America.

But promotion only goes so far. There are deeper forces swirling through the bow-tie crowd. I put on my conspiracy theory tinfoil hat and it finally hit me: Today's professors are academics first and teachers a distant second. The best of them boast that they only have to teach one course each semester, as opposed to the two or three that young pups must endure before they are tenured.

In other words, this would be a great job if it weren't for the students. Research, a team of graduate students as underpaid serfs, papers in academic journals, a few talks at esoteric conferences—these are the paths to success in the academic world. Oh, and some well-paid consulting gigs on the side. Creating a video catalog of lectures and putting them up online—it's a brilliant move, don't you see? That way, pretty soon, you won't even have to show up Tuesdays and Thursdays at 4:30 P.M. at Olin Hall Lecture Room 102. Just set up a projector and play the video. Better yet, just have the kids download it into their iPods. Update the lecture every decade or so whether you need to or not. This is the new face of higher education—tenured professors doing research who don't have to bother teaching courses ever again. And with email to replace office hours, you won't need any kind of personal contact at all with undergrads.

Think of the possibilities. There are physical limitations on how many kids can fit on campuses today. Arizona State is up to 50,000 undergrads while Harvard is stuck at 6,700. But digital real estate is infinite. Watch our courses at home. Take a sophomore year equivalency test and get 34 percent off your tuition at Amazon: For the low, low price of $30,000, you can tell friends—and employers—that you graduated from a small school in Cambridge. Brilliant. And it would work too, except for one thing. Parents have plans for that soon-to-be spare bedroom. Oh well, nice try. ♦

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Their Own Worst Enemy

Kentucky's Republicans implode.

BY JOHN DAVID DYCHE

Louisville

Ernie Fletcher took office in 2003 as only the eighth Republican governor in Kentucky history and the first elected since 1967. Registered Democrats outnumber Republicans by about 3-2 in the Bluegrass State, but Fletcher parlayed public disgust with the adulterous outgoing two-term Democrat Paul Patton into a 10 percentage-point victory over then-attorney general Ben Chandler.

The GOP then held both of Kentucky's Senate seats, five of its six House seats, and a first-ever majority of the state senate. Registration aside, more Kentuckians identified themselves to pollsters as Republicans than Democrats. Kentucky's political transformation from blue to red was almost complete, and the architect of this feat, Senator Mitch McConnell, set his bespectacled sights on the Democrats' last redoubt, the state's House of Representatives.

Four years later, polls put Fletcher's reelection bid 16 to 20 points behind Steve Beshear, a pedestrian Democrat last seen losing badly to McConnell in 1996. Chandler sits securely in Fletcher's former House seat mulling a run against McConnell's crusty Senate colleague, Jim Bunning, who will be 79 if he faces voters again in 2010. And Democrats even dream of defeating McConnell, their *bête noire* and the Republican leader in the Senate, next year.

Aside from the obvious effects of Iraq and President Bush's plunging popularity, what has happened to the Kentucky GOP? Simply put, self-inflicted wounds. McConnell himself still fares well in public approval and fantastically in fundraising, with a record $9.1 million already banked. But he's the exception.

The first major misstep occurred in the same 2003 primary that saw Fletcher, with McConnell's tacit support, beat two able and well-known foes for the gubernatorial nomination. For attorney general, Republicans inexplicably opted for an eccentric acquitted arsonist, erstwhile Democrat, and floor-covering salesman, Jack Wood, over a much more qualified candidate. Some sages attributed the upset to Wood's simple, solid sounding name, others to support from an anti-abortion activist group. Whatever the cause, Wood was not a credible general election candidate.

Enter Democrat Greg Stumbo of Prestonsburg, deep in the coal-rich Eastern Kentucky mountains. A wealthy plaintiffs' lawyer and longtime state House floor leader, the colorful, canny, and utterly unscrupulous Stumbo is a Robert Penn Warren character come to life. He overcame nasty paternity litigation, a drunk-driving charge, and some shady-looking land deals to breeze past Wood and into an office from which he could hector the wet-behind-the-ears Fletcher forces.

Fletcher's résumé was tailor-made for religious, authority-respecting Kentuckians. Before going to Congress from central Kentucky's Bluegrass region in 1998, he had been a fighter pilot, a lay Baptist minister, and a doctor. Fletcher promised to end the "good old boy politics of a bygone era," referring to the decades of Democratic dominance. But the pent-up demand for GOP patronage soon burst loose, and since Republicans had been wandering so long in Kentucky's political wilderness, the new governor found few experienced Frankfort hands to help him handle the flood.

Early mistakes earned Fletcher an image of incompetence. He tried to freeze out reporters from the state's largest newspaper, Louisville's longtime liberal bastion, the *Courier-Journal*. While perhaps satisfying at a primal partisan level, the strong-arm tactic was self-defeating at all others. Next came a brouhaha about terminating state park workers sporting tattoos, not exactly a firing offense in the eyes of Kentucky's rural everymen.

Kentuckians were badly embarrassed when Fletcher's airplane's transponder failed over restricted Washington airspace en route to the Ronald Reagan memorial service in June 2004. The unidentified craft caused evacuation of the Capitol, sending dignitaries like Margaret Thatcher scrambling. The top general at the North American Aerospace Defense Command almost ordered an F-16 fighter to shoot down the intruder. Unfazed by the furor and assuming an absurdly unjustified prominence, Fletcher positioned himself, Zelig-like, next to Secretary of State Colin Powell at the ceremony.

But this was all prelude. In May 2005, a disgruntled bureaucrat brought Stumbo information about Fletcher administration hiring improprieties. Instead of referring the matter to the state personnel board as Beshear had done when he was attorney general, the ambitious and hyperpartisan Stumbo persuaded a Frankfort judge (since retired and working for Beshear's gubernatorial campaign) to impanel a special grand jury. Amid a flurry of search warrants for computers and offices, Stumbo secured indictments of 13 Fletcher aides and associates.

After some political flailing, Fletcher held a surreal Capitol rotunda pep rally at which he announced pardons for everyone but himself. The governor described the indicted as good people, some of whom "have made mistakes because of inexperience, and a complicated, unclear merit

John David Dyche is a Louisville lawyer and columnist for the Louisville Courier-Journal.

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law." He nonetheless fired several of them shortly thereafter.

Fletcher then took the Fifth Amendment before the grand jury, which issued three misdemeanor indictments of the governor in May 2006. A special judge ruled Fletcher immune from trial while in office, and Stumbo concluded the case might complicate his quest for higher office. So the antagonists struck a deal dismissing the charges against Fletcher in exchange for the governor's admission that "the evidence strongly indicates wrongdoing by his administration with regard to personnel actions within the merit system" and that Stumbo's actions were a "necessary and proper exercise of his constitutional duty."

In an immediate about-face, an unapologetic Fletcher ridiculed Stumbo's investigation as "a political witch hunt" while seeking renomination against two challengers. The first, a hot-rodding millionaire businessman, Billy Harper, was a political novice. The second, former representative Anne Northup, had just lost the Louisville congressional seat she had held against all odds and Democratic efforts since 1996. Both warned Republicans that the merit system mess made Fletcher unelectable.

Harper dumped $6 million into his quixotic quest. Northup started late and went negative before statewide voters really knew her. She came off as a shrill Catholic from Louisville, not the best blend in more provincial precincts. Fletcher ran ads portraying himself as a bullied little schoolboy and survived with 50.1 percent of the primary vote. Beshear, meanwhile, won a 41 percent plurality in a six-candidate Democratic field.

In an attempt to change the subject from his merit system problems, Fletcher seized on Beshear's signature issue of bringing casino gambling to Kentucky. Although Kentucky is at the proverbial buckle of the Bible Belt, parimutuel horserace wagering, a state lottery, and ubiquitous bingo parlors have probably paved the way for the sort of full-blown casinos its citizens see flourishing just across its borders. When that issue did not move the needle, Fletcher began badgering Beshear about his law firm's lucrative role in liquidating a large insurance company. Calling it "Kentucky's Enron," Fletcher accused Beshear of conflicts of interest, covering up a critical report, and profiting handsomely at the expense of the company's bereft employees and shareholders.

Ernie Fletcher

JASON SEILER

Despite his myriad difficulties, Fletcher has compiled an impressive record of conservative accomplishments. It includes comprehensive revenue-neutral tax reform that stabilized state finances and liberated approximately half a million Kentuckians from state income tax; four years of surplus; fewer state employees; model Medicaid reform; higher education funding and teacher pay; and crackdowns on dangerous and road-destroying overweight coal trucks. To his supporters' dismay, he has insufficiently emphasized these successes.

When seeking his first term, Fletcher published a 52-page policy platform. Badly behind Beshear, he has offered no positive agenda Kentuckians can support, much less rally around.

Although Fletcher's overall record compares favorably with those of his Democratic predecessors, he has failed to overcome the fallout from his stumbles. He invited voters to hold him to a higher standard, then fell short. Folks might have forgiven him if he had apologized. But now he is running out of time and money to turn things around.

To the consternation of Fletcher loyalists, McConnell stayed more or less mum throughout the Stumbo ordeal and primary campaign. He could not condone the administration's errors or make things better by commenting. McConnell's main concern was minimizing damage to the party he had painstakingly nurtured and to his own political prospects. He now stumps with Fletcher, but faces the unpleasant prospect of running next year with an old Democratic nemesis in the governor's mansion.

McConnell's Senate leadership

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responsibilities have also put him increasingly in the bull's-eye back home, as he has carried the Bush administration's sagging banner on controversial issues like Iraq and immigration reform. Stumbo is considering the '08 Senate race, but Democrats are desperately trolling for a more savory option, preferably someone who can self-finance. The most mentioned propects suffer from a charisma deficit, so speculation centers on soon-to-be reelected state auditor Crit Luallen. She is smooth as single-barrel bourbon, but suffers from association with Paul Patton and would need a ton of national money.

A recent *Courier-Journal* poll put McConnell's approval rating at a respectable 54 percent despite months of attack ads and made-for-media street demonstrations by the pro-surrender left. McConnell's parliamentary skill has so effectively frustrated Senate Democrats that they yearn to knock him off, as Republicans did Tom Daschle. A formidable campaigner with a gift for hard-hitting but humorous attack ads, McConnell will make sure the race is more about his opponent and Hillary Clinton than it is about him.

After losing to Fletcher for governor, Chandler, the grandson of former governor, senator, and baseball commissioner A.B. "Happy" Chandler, beat McConnell's hand-picked candidate for the open congressional seat from which he now eyes the 2010 Senate race. Bunning says he will seek another term, but barely battled back from multiple missteps and not-so-subtle suggestions of senility in his last campaign. If the feisty baseball Hall of Famer heads for the showers, the likely frontrunners will be two GOP congressmen, Geoff Davis of northern Kentucky's Cincinnati exurbs and Ed Whitfield from the state's far west.

The Republican tide may have receded in Kentucky, but the commonwealth remains reliably to the right of center. But if the Bluegrass GOP hopes to rebound, it will have to more broadly emulate McConnell's consistent example of combining conservative policy with competent political execution. ♦

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Northern Virginia Goes South?

The Democrats have their eye on the Old Dominion. BY SAMANTHA SAULT

Virginia has gone for every Republican presidential candidate since 1968. But this model southern conservative stronghold has been moving to the left in recent years. Democrats captured the governorship in 2001 and 2005, and Jim Webb defeated incumbent Republican senator George Allen in a nasty 2006 race that received national attention. A recent Rasmussen poll reported that Hillary Clinton has a 49 percent approval rating in the state and is neck and neck with the Republican frontrunners. "There is absolutely no question that Virginia is bluing," says C. Richard Cranwell, chairman of Virginia's Democratic party and a 30-year veteran of the House of Delegates.

Democrats see an opportunity to take control of the Virginia state legislature on November 6. All 140 seats are up for election, including the 40 state senators, and the Democrats need only gain four senate seats to have a majority. The senators elected this year will be responsible for the 2011 redistricting, and the majority party will be able to draw districts in its favor. State Democrats are particularly targeting three Northern Virginia incumbent senators who serve majority blue districts: Jeannemarie Devolites Davis in the 34th District, Ken Cuccinelli in the 37th District, and Jay O'Brien in the 39th District.

Devolites Davis served in the House of Delegates for six years and then was elected to the senate in 2003. "Although she's won four terms out here, it's never been friendly territory," says her husband, Virginia congressman Tom Davis. Not only did her district go for both the governor, Tim Kaine, and for Webb, but it also went for John Kerry in 2004—even though Virginia as a whole preferred Bush.

Her opponent, J. Chapman "Chap" Petersen, is a two-term delegate who lost his bid for lieutenant governor in 2005. Cranwell considers Petersen one of the party's best bets this election, and Democratic PACs and leadership

Samantha Sault is an editorial assistant at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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caucuses are pouring money into the 34th District. Petersen has now raised over $700,000, a large chunk of which came from the state Democratic party and Kaine's PAC Moving Virginia Forward. Petersen is confident: "Northern Virginia has taken on a more critical mass of population," he says, "and Northern Virginia tends Democratic."

But Devolites Davis is no right-winger, and says she is a "perfect fit" for the district she classifies as "fiscally conservative, socially moderate." She is pro-life, but recently told the gay-rights group Equality Fairfax that she considers herself a "RINO"—Republican In Name Only. At a candidates' forum in early October, she emphasized her passion for stricter gun control—and Petersen's past votes against gun control legislation. (She says the district is 85 percent in favor of gun control.) She is proud that she wrote Virginia's children's health care legislation, FAMIS (Federal Access to Medical Insurance Security), which, like the federal S-chip bill that Bush recently vetoed, provides insurance to children whose parents make too much to qualify for Medicaid yet still can't afford private insurance. Devolites Davis has raised more money than Petersen, with nearly $1 million in campaign funds.

Matt Smyth of the University of Virginia's Center for Politics says that although Democrats have a statewide advantage they shouldn't be planning their victory party. "One thing you have to be careful of is applying all of the national political trends and assuming that they're going to have the same impact in state elections," he says. "It takes a while for the trend to filter down into local districts, to local elections. I don't think it's a sign that, just because we've had two Democratic governors, all of a sudden the Democrats are favored."

Devolites Davis believes the Democrats' advantage is a short-term trend. "I think that you're just seeing a reaction to national politics," she says, noting that she spends much of her free time knocking on doors and talking to constituents. She says Northern Virginians "are tired of the war, and they're not very happy with President Bush," but she also thinks that liberals such as Hillary Clinton, Nancy Pelosi, and Harry Reid are polarizing figures who will push conservatives and moderates back to the GOP.

And although Northern Virginia increasingly votes Democratic in presidential and gubernatorial elections, local Republicans still have an edge. Two of the area's three congressmen, Tom Davis and Frank Wolf, are Republicans, and Northern Virginia's moderate Republicans consistently raise more campaign money than their Democratic opponents. Democrats try to tie Northern Virginia Republicans to Bush and the war in Iraq, but local elections come down to issues like roads and social services. Devolites Davis has a strong record on both, and recently helped pass a $400 million transportation package for Northern Virginia.

Smyth stresses that incumbents have the edge in local elections, and Northern Virginia exhibits the "trends that have existed for the past decade or so that favor incumbents." Devolites Davis is confident that her record will enable her to keep her seat because her constituents view her as "an individual" rather than a hard-line Republican. Tom Davis agrees, and says, "She's just got to define herself, which she's done consistently, and she'll be okay." As evidence, after the early October candidates' forum, Devolites Davis excitedly told me about a usually Democratic household in her district that had one of her gigantic signs in their front yard.

One thing is clear: Virginia has become a battleground state. "Virginia has shown that it has been more competitive than the average southern red state," says Smyth, "but whether that's something that will keep going in that direction or stabilize is something we'll have to wait and see." ♦

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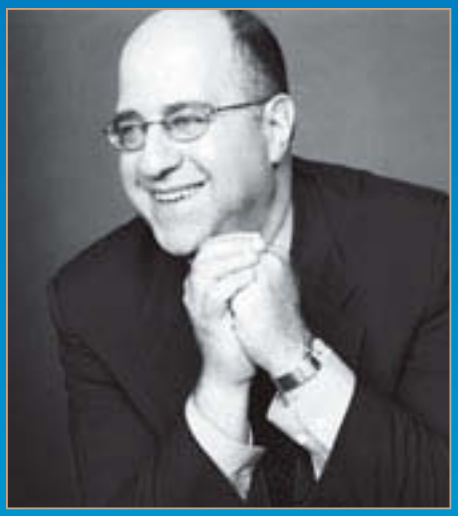

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While Pakistan Burns

Al Qaeda regroups in the tribal areas, the government falters. What is to be done?

By Daveed Gartenstein-Ross

If there were any doubt about the reach of militants in Pakistan, last week's events should have put them to rest. The procession celebrating the return home of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto was cut short by twin bombs that killed over 130 and wounded several hundred more on Thursday night. The attackers almost succeeded in killing Bhutto as well. The blast shattered the windows in her vehicle and set a police escort car ablaze. It was a sophisticated attack, and the bombs may have been accompanied by sniper fire.

Extremist violence in Pakistan is hardly news. The siege of the militant Lal Masjid mosque in July occurred in Islamabad, the capital. Supporters of al Qaeda exist in the military and intelligence services; indeed, there may prove to be a link between militant infiltrators of these institutions and the attempt on Bhutto's life. The mysterious fact that the streetlights were off and the phone lines dead during the attack further raises the possibility of collaboration with ideologically sympathetic low-level government officials. Still, the stronghold of militant activity in Pakistan is clearly the remote and mountainous Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) on the border with Afghanistan, where Pakistan has ceded more and more ground to al Qaeda and its allies over the past year.

The government's successive concessions to militants have not always been viewed as defeats; indeed, U.S. and Pakistani officials tried to spin them as successes. A year ago, after the signing of one agreement, Pakistan's ambassador to the United States told a network reporter, "The Waziristan accord is not a good thing—it's a very good thing. It's a new step." Although that accord ceded control over significant portions of the FATA to tribal leaders aligned with al Qaeda and the Taliban, Washington was slow to sound the alarm. Some State Department officials defended the agreements, and President Bush himself offered tepid support during a September 2006 press conference with Pakistani president Pervez Musharraf.

One year and three more accords later, all analysts concede that the tribal areas are now the stronghold of al Qaeda's senior leadership—probably including Osama bin Laden and Ayman al Zawahiri. As in Afghanistan under the Taliban, terrorist training camps—believed by U.S. intelligence to number almost 30—operate freely. The *9/11 Commission Report* warned that to carry out a catastrophic act of terror like 9/11, an organization requires "time, space, and the ability to perform competent planning and staff work," as well as "a command structure able to make necessary decisions and possessing the authority and contacts to assemble needed people, money, and materials." Al Qaeda now enjoys both of these in Pakistan.

One result is the heightened terrorist threat manifest in the attack on Bhutto, but also in recent plots against the West. Last year U.S. and British authorities announced the disruption of an ambitious scheme to blow up airliners en route from Britain to the United States with liquid explosives. The operatives had trained at al Qaeda's FATA camps and met with high-level operatives Matiur Rehman and Abu Ubaidah al-Masri in Pakistan. Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff recently told ABC News that the plot, if successful, would have killed thousands. One day last month, authorities in Europe broke up two terrorist cells in Denmark and Germany. Both cells were allegedly planning attacks; both were in touch with high-level extremists in Pakistan and had members who had trained there. While these arrests represent a success for law enforcement, they also signal al Qaeda's regeneration.

Daveed Gartenstein-Ross is vice president of research at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies and the author of My Year Inside Radical Islam. *He is grateful for the assistance of Joshua Goodman in the preparation of this article.*

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The scene of devastation following the bomb attack on the procession of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto, Karachi, October 18, 2007

AP PHOTO/SHAKIL ADIL

Al Qaeda's rebound was several years in the making. After the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001 toppled the Taliban, most of al Qaeda's central leadership relocated to the FATA. Prompted by assassination attempts against Musharraf, Pakistan's military mounted a campaign to flush al Qaeda out of the tribal areas—but it suffered so many losses that by September 2006 Musharraf felt he had no option but to deal with his would-be killers. His solution was the Waziristan Accords, peace agreements that essentially ceded North and South Waziristan to the Taliban and al Qaeda. As part of the accords, Pakistan's military agreed that it would no longer carry out air or ground strikes in the tribal areas, that it would disband its human intelligence network, and that it would abandon outposts and border crossings throughout Waziristan. The accords even allowed non-Pakistani militants to continue to reside in Waziristan if they made an unenforceable promise to "keep the peace."

The failure of these accords was predictable and almost immediate. Shortly after the accords were signed, a U.S. military official told the Associated Press that "American troops on Afghanistan's eastern border have seen a threefold increase" in cross-border attacks from Pakistan. Since then, Musharraf has entered into similar treaties over the tribal areas of Bajaur, Swat, and Mohmand.

This leaves us with the present alarming picture: relative security for al Qaeda's senior leadership, greater instability in Afghanistan, a steady flow of skilled terrorists coming out of training camps, and a systemic risk of catastrophic attack reminiscent of the risk we faced before 9/11. This occurs against the backdrop of Musharraf's political impotence. Despite his electoral victory in October, Islamic extremists have sworn to topple him from power, and his clumsy handling of conflicts with his supreme court has destroyed his already dwindling support among liberal elites. Even the Bhutto assassination attempt has fueled anti-Musharraf propaganda, as rumors quickly spread that he was behind the attack—intending to use it as a pretext to impose martial law. Shadowy figures like Generals Hamid Gul and Mirza Aslam Beg, whose ideological sympathies lie with the Taliban and al Qaeda, lurk in the background. All of which conjures up images of the "nightmare scenario": a nuclear-armed state openly aligned with our terrorist enemies.

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Thus far, American policy toward Pakistan has amounted to virtually unconditional support for Musharraf, coupled with occasional airstrikes against high-level al Qaeda targets in the tribal areas. Emblematic of the latter is an October 30, 2006, strike against a madrassa in a Bajaur village that allegedly served as an al Qaeda training camp. While Zawahiri may have been the strike's target, the madrassa was affiliated with another key al Qaeda confederate, Faqir Mohammed, who had contracted a strategic marriage with a woman from the local Mamoond tribe. A Predator strike destroyed the school, but it hardly slowed down Mohammed, who gave an interview to NBC at the scene of the wreckage and later spoke at the funeral for the victims.

Nor is any satisfactory alternative military strategy on offer. One senior American military intelligence officer said it would take a sustained air campaign to deprive al Qaeda of its safe haven in the FATA. "We're talking about a Serbia-style prolonged campaign," he said. NATO's air campaign against Serbia's military lasted from March 24 through June 11, 1999, and comprised over 38,000 missions involving approximately 1,000 aircraft and a barrage of Tomahawk missiles. Such a campaign in Pakistan's tribal areas, the officer said, would "heavily degrade" but not eliminate al Qaeda. "Their camps won't be actively producing terrorists," he said, "but they'll survive the air campaign." Furthermore, a campaign of that scale might topple Musharraf.

Under the current system of covert pinprick bombing, Pakistan frequently takes responsibility for U.S. strikes. This will not deprive al Qaeda of its safe haven, although it may occasionally yield important kills.

What about covert action? American Special Operations forces are already engaging in actions coordinated with the airstrikes. The most notable achievement in this regard occurred in southern Afghanistan, where NATO and Afghan forces killed Mullah Dadullah Lang, the Taliban's top military commander, back in May. There are barriers, though, to expanding the Special Operations forces' role. The topography makes it difficult to insert and remove forces without being detected. Within the military, there is a real desire to avoid another Operation Eagle Claw—the ill-fated attempt to rescue hostages held at the U.S. embassy in Tehran during President Carter's term.

We are not doomed to hold to our present course—supporting Musharraf, bombing off and on, with no plan for depriving al Qaeda of its safe haven.

JASON SEILER

Unfortunately, the potential for things going awry is high if Special Operations missions are increased. Special Operations forces act in small teams and are lightly armed, so they could be overwhelmed by larger contingents of al Qaeda and Taliban fighters. Enemy forces in Pakistan are well armed and trained, and they have SA-18 surface-to-air missiles capable of downing American helicopters.

There is always the option of a full-scale U.S. counterinsurgency operation in the FATA, including the insertion of American ground troops. Some commentators favor this approach. Steve Schippert, the managing editor of *ThreatsWatch*, told me, "At the end of the day, there is no getting around that if al Qaeda is going to be defeated in Pakistan, it will take our boots on the ground." Military affairs analyst Bill Roggio agrees that in an ideal world we would conduct counterinsurgency operations jointly with Pakistan's armed forces, but deems this unlikely in the current American political context. And the insertion of American ground forces would heighten the risk of Musharraf's losing power.

Pakistan's military, meanwhile, does not appear to be up to the task of confronting the militants. It is unclear

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what level of casualties caused Musharraf to make a deal with the extremists; the numbers are secret and estimates vary widely. Most observers believe Pakistan lost about 1,000 men in its fight to control the FATA, but some think it has lost more soldiers in this fight than the 3,800 the United States has lost in Iraq. Then, too, Pakistani soldiers have shown reluctance to fight their "Muslim brothers." This unwillingness was bolstered by a fatwa issued in 2004 by clerics Mohammed Abdul Aziz and Abdur Rashid Ghazi stating that Pakistani soldiers killed in South Waziristan deserved neither a Muslim funeral nor burial in a Muslim cemetery.

Where does the dearth of military options leave us? Pakistan's government could still play an important role despite its military's weakness. Seth Jones, of the RAND Corporation, argues that the centerpiece of U.S. strategy should be diplomatic pressure on Islamabad, once the political situation in Pakistan is calmer. "We need a clear diplomatic message," Jones said. "Al Qaeda is regenerated, and a number of recent terror plots are linked back to its tribal areas. Pakistan faces a choice not too different from what it faced on 9/11."

U.S. assistance, Jones says, should be tied directly to the arrest or killing of key al Qaeda leaders such as Ayman al Zawahiri. "The threat then would be that if we can't get clear progress in a measurable timeframe, this would leave the United States in the unfortunate position of having to significantly decrease its assistance to Pakistan and move in the direction of India," he says. Jones thinks this pressure should be aimed at getting Pakistan's military and intelligence services to undertake a "clear and hold strategy" against al Qaeda safe havens—not as a military offensive, but a police and intelligence operation.

Others favor an even more aggressive Pakistani role, beginning with a declaration that the treaties concerning the tribal areas are dead. There is ample justification for renouncing the accords, which the Taliban violated from the outset by killing Pakistani troops, sending its fighters into Afghanistan to fight coalition forces, and setting up separate governmental entities.

If Pakistan nullified the FATA agreements, it could take aggressive measures without risking its troops in the tribal areas. Musharraf could treat the FATA as a hostile province and impede militants' movements by erecting fences along the perimeter (as Pakistan has done on parts of its border with India) and establishing an internal passport system. Anybody who traveled out of the FATA could be treated as though he were entering from an enemy nation, and would be subject to searches and questioning. Impeding the movement of FATA-based extremists would not only hinder their efforts, but also help coalition forces in Afghanistan to track who had visited the high-risk FATA. As a senior American military intelligence officer put it, "FATA should become Taiwan to Pakistan's China."

The major problem with this approach is that it hinges on Musharraf. He was presented with a sterling opportunity to cancel Pakistan's accords with militants earlier this summer, after his forces raided the Lal Masjid. That mosque had been a center for the recruitment of fighters and suicide bombers to combat coalition forces in Afghanistan. Militants in the tribal areas vowed revenge for the raid. A number of attacks on Pakistani forces were launched from the FATA thereafter, in clear violation of the accords. Musharraf talked tough, but he never declared the accords dead—and ultimately reaffirmed his commitment to withdraw all Pakistani troops from tribal areas by year's end.

Musharraf's reluctance to abandon the accord framework does not mean he will never do so. The United States has not applied sustained pressure on this issue. It should develop a basket of incentives to persuade Musharraf to junk the agreements. Still, even as it hopes for the best from Pakistan, Washington should be prepared for continuing inaction.

American successes in Iraq over the past year may hold some lessons for tackling the problem in Pakistan. A critical factor in the turnaround during the tenure of General David Petraeus as the top U.S. commander in Iraq has been our improved ability to align with tribal elements that oppose the brutality of al Qaeda. The Anbar Salvation Front—a collection of Sunni tribesmen, Iraqi nationalists, ex-Baathists, and others united in the goal of driving al Qaeda from their country—has been a vital ally in destroying the safe haven al Qaeda enjoyed in Anbar province. We won't quickly find an ally in Pakistan as capable as the late Abdul Sattar al-Rishawi, who led the Anbar Salvation Front, but the broader lesson is the need to understand local actors and rely on more than our sheer military might.

One expert on irregular warfare who frequently consults with the federal government argues that the Anbar Salvation Front model should be considered for Pakistan. Though her ideas are "the starting point for a conversation" rather than a well-developed proposal, she notes surface similarities between Iraq and Pakistan. "You have multiple tribes," she said, "some of which have been in conflict and some of which have been aligned. The way people make their living is also similar. There are settled tribes that live by agriculture, and tribes that have lived by smuggling,

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banditry, and tribal warfare." The FATA tribes apparently differ in their approach to al Qaeda, too, the northern tribes being more welcoming than the southern tribes.

"There are people within the Pakistani tribes who don't buy into the Taliban's concept of Islam," this analyst said. "They don't believe this is the correct way to practice the religion. To me this suggests that there are fissures, both ideological and tribal, that can be exploited." But exploiting them will take a good deal of time, given our lack of cultural and institutional understanding. "Before you start getting involved in these situations," a senior American military intelligence officer told me, "you need to know who is whose enemy, which groups are backing the Taliban and al Qaeda. At the clan and tribal level, we don't have a good idea of this." Such knowledge could perhaps be gleaned from our Afghan allies, since neither Pashtun nor Baluch society recognizes the artificial border between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Al Qaeda draws its strength from specific individuals and clans inside Pakistan, including powerful allies in the military and intelligence service, tribal sheikhs, and figures in the underground economy. We need to better understand the patronage networks that al Qaeda and the Taliban benefit from, and undermine them. The United States can then use a variety of sticks and carrots. It can support tribal groups that oppose al Qaeda and the Taliban against rivals who favor them. It can work with Pakistani and other intelligence services to shut down the businesses of individuals involved in the financial apparatus that backs our enemies—such as organized crime kingpin Dawood Ibrahim—obtaining blackmail information on them and arresting their operatives.

David E. Kaplan, who investigated the nexus between organized crime and terrorism for *U.S. News & World Report*, believes there is no easy way to stop the flow of money to the Taliban and al Qaeda. Although it is known that al Qaeda benefits from the drug trade, controlling smuggling routes from Afghanistan to Pakistan and essentially taxing each shipment, a solution to regional drug trafficking remains elusive. "If you go after opium growers," he said, "you'll undercut [Afghan president Hamid] Karzai's government because a lot of these guys back him." Kaplan says attempts are being made now to go after factions involved in the narcotics trade that back al Qaeda and the Taliban rather than those that back Karzai, "but the lines aren't always clear. The narcotics industry is diffuse, with lots of different players."

Kaplan does think that attempting to shut down sources of al Qaeda and Taliban funding within Pakistan's underground economy holds promise, given the American authorities' experience with combating multinational criminal organizations. "Look at how we broke the U.S. mafia in the past twenty years," he said. "But the bad news is that these guys are in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The DEA didn't even have an office in Afghanistan until after 9/11, so they have a lot of catching up to do."

The U.S. military intelligence officer quoted above believes we should be ready to undermine support for the Taliban and al Qaeda within Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and military. "A large number of ISI agents who are responsible for helping the Taliban and al Qaeda should be thrown in jail or killed," he said. "What I think we should do in Pakistan is a parallel version of what Iran has run against us in Iraq: giving money, empowering actors. Some of this will involve working with some shady characters, but the alternative—sending U.S. forces into Pakistan for a sustained bombing campaign—is worse."

Seth Jones of RAND is cautious about this approach because of the heavy support for the Taliban within the ISI. He notes that militants are supported not just by rogue elements but seemingly at the top levels as well. Certainly top leaders of ISI have shown little interest in arresting their own.

As to the carrots that might entice actors in Pakistan to turn against al Qaeda, the United States could enhance the prestige of commanders and units within Pakistan's military who willingly cooperated in efforts to root out militants in the tribal areas. America could make sure they had the best equipment by earmarking aid for specific regiments or commanders. Similarly, U.S. military training could focus on units and commanders who had demonstrated their willingness to undertake military or policing efforts against extremist groups.

Whatever road we take in Pakistan will involve a substantial time commitment, and progress is likely to be slow. American policymakers and analysts still have a state-centric orientation, and have poorly incorporated nontraditional actors into their strategic thinking. The long process of improving our understanding of the Pakistani political scene at a granular level is essential to success.

Every option for moving forward has associated challenges and pitfalls. But, contrary to some pessimistic views, we do have options. We are not doomed to remain on our present course—supporting Musharraf no matter what he does and bombing targets of opportunity, with no plan for depriving al Qaeda of its safe haven. That course is proving ineffective. Worse, it may allow for another catastrophic terrorist attack on the United States. Surely it would be better to act now, using every means at hand to craft an alternative strategy. ♦

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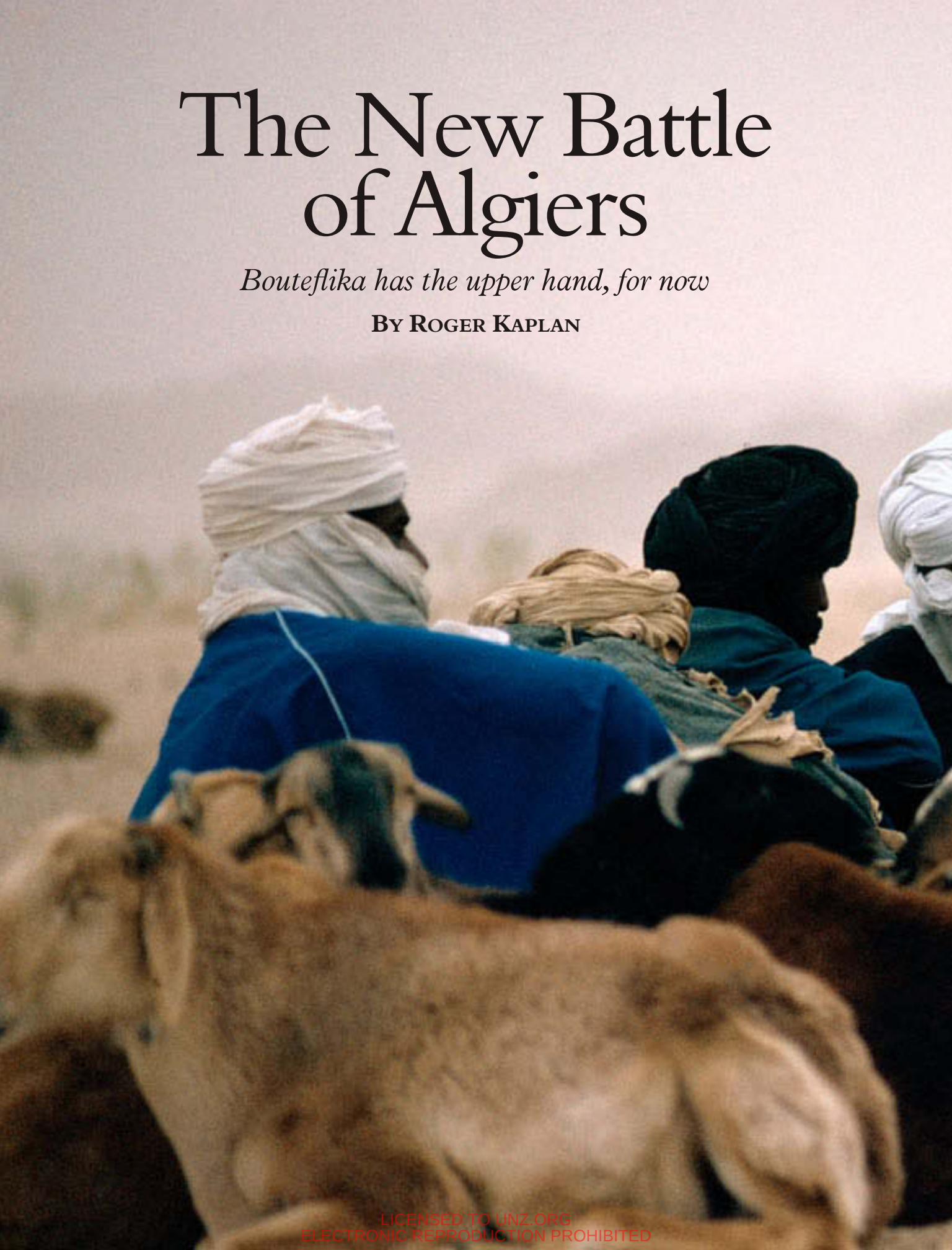
The New Battle of Algiers

Bouteflika has the upper hand, for now

By Roger Kaplan



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Overshadowed by Iraq and Afghanistan in the global war on terror, less scrutinized than Turkey as a laboratory of Islam's compatibility with liberal democracy, Algeria remains a crucial testing ground for the ability of postcolonial Islamic societies to develop modern institutions. Algeria is also, since emerging from its own war on Islamist terror in the 1990s, a de facto partner of the United States, as soldiers of both nations patrol the Mediterranean to its north and the Sahara to its south. But like so much in this long war of shadows and mirages, bombs and machine guns, reversals and betrayals, the Algerian scene is opaque. The attempted assassination of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika last month reminds us how ephemeral a success on any front in this war can be, how fragile a truce, how premature a shout of victory.

Who would want to kill Abdelaziz Bouteflika? On the face of it, the question seems absurd. The Algerian president, elected in 1999 and reelected in 2004, is widely perceived as having brought peace and prosperity and even a measure of national reconciliation to a country ravaged by civil war. The war took 150,000 lives in a country of

Roger Kaplan is the author of Conservative Socialism: The Decline of Radicalism and the Triumph of the Left in France.

Tuareg nomads: They are not in the jihad business, and never have been. (Photo: CORBIS)

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30 million, according to the government, which rejects the term "civil war" inasmuch as the conflict pitted Islamists—rather than a region or a sect—against an Arab-African society trying to break with its postcolonial system of one-party, socialist, police-state authoritarianism.

Bouteflika is the man who turned the page. Now 70, he was foreign minister during the presidency of Colonel Houari Boumédienne (1965-78), then lived mostly abroad, in the Gulf states and Europe. Returning to Algeria in 1989, Bouteflika stayed in the background, eventually positioning himself on the side of a liberal, multiparty third way between the authoritarian National Liberation Front (FLN) regime of his early years and the theocracy the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) sought to impose. He led cautiously, preferring to let General Liamine Zéroual take the first plunge into a competitive presidential election, in 1994. When Zéroual stepped down in 1999 before the completion of his term, Bouteflika ran with the support of the army leadership. The other major candidates withdrew, claiming a fair election was impossible.

The new president proclaimed an end to fratricide and international isolation (for several years, no non-Algerian airline flew into Algiers, so great was the fear of terrorism). He told people to stop hating one another and get back to work. He sent Algerian diplomats out to reassert a claim to regional leadership. He traveled abroad, reopened the country for business.

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Following in Zéroual's footsteps, Bouteflika pursued a strategy of fight, then vote, then reform, then reconcile. It worked, in part because the country was exhausted and the Islamists' original constituency was repelled by their violence. Gradually, as the cycle of terror and counterterror wound down and the fight was reduced to mopping up and policing operations, Bouteflika could play the magnanimity card. He easily won a national referendum in 2005 approving his offer of forgiveness for repentant Islamist fighters.

On the reform side, Bouteflika loosened the fundamentalist-inspired family legislation adopted under Boumédienne, which secularists vehemently opposed and Islamists wanted to strengthen. As a result, women can now sue for divorce, for example, and do not need a male family member's permission to get a passport. Despite his ill-disguised contempt for the Berber-majority region of Kabylie, and his refusal to apologize for the brutal repression of a grassroots movement urging faster democratization there in 2001, Bouteflika continued to insist that Algeria could and would change.

Bouteflika raised the status of Berber languages, doing away with the Arabic monopoly in schools and official business; the military, meanwhile, made English obligatory for career officers. At the same time, he allowed non-violent Islamist parties to compete in local and parliamentary elections and take portfolios in his governments. Zéroual had already moved in these directions, provoking the same kinds of questions: Did the Islamic parties really accept the democratic ground rules, or were they only fronting for the gunmen? In their heyday, in the early 1990s, the Islamists of the FIS had openly proclaimed that one election sufficed, so long as they won it: "One man, one vote, one time," as the saying goes. Would the amnestied Islamists return to the hills and safe-houses, as some observers, pointing to a recent spike in violence, even now believe?

Today, Bouteflika presides over a cabinet made up of men and women who are not otherwise on speaking terms. Hardliners in the army, called "eradicators," have not publicly challenged the amnesty. No one knows how they will react if the security situation deteriorates.

One factor working against a return to civil war is the hydrocarbons-fueled prosperity that began early in Bouteflika's first term. Favored in geographic and human resources, Algeria should be a prime beneficiary of globalization. Undercutting its potential, however, is chronic mismanagement, due to a pernicious inheritance that combines the worst features of French statism—trying to micromanage everything from the center—and Ottoman sultanism—trying to control everything from the bathhouse and the harem. Here, Bouteflika has reformed little, and cronyism and secrecy remain key to getting things done, or not. The most important thing not getting done in Algeria is job-creation. You do not have to be Benjamin Franklin to see that with a population largely made up of young people, most of whom know someone, or know of someone, gainfully employed in Europe or North America, idleness is social poison. Energy-sector revenues are facilitating some rebuilding of infrastructure, but they have not sparked the small-enterprise boom needed for the creation of real wealth, as opposed to riches divvied up by the ruling cliques.

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A rally against terrorism, with a poster depicting Algerian president Abdelaziz Bouteflika for a backdrop, September 9, 2007

FAYEZ NURELDINE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

So Bouteflika's record is somewhat ambiguous. But does that warrant killing him? The suicide bomber waiting for the president in the eastern city of Batna on September 6 apparently thought so. Spotted before the arrival of the presidential motorcade, he detonated his ordnance, taking two dozen bystanders with him. Two days later, in Dellys, on the eastern coast, a truck bomb killed 35. And this followed repeated attacks during the winter and spring, including one on April 11 that simultaneously hit the main government center in downtown Algiers and a police barracks in a suburb. As the toll mounts into the hundreds, it appears that the alliance formed two summers ago between the local terrorists of the "Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat" and a new "Al Qaeda in the Arab Maghreb" was no mere publicity stunt, as some once assumed.

The government, which normally downplays terrorism news, claims its forces destroyed a substantial terrorist band in the Kabylie region last July, and followed up with successful engagements there in September. Kabylie is not jihad-friendly, but its rugged mountains have long served as hideouts for outlaws and insurrectionists.

After the assassination attempt at Batna, Bouteflika blamed a "foreign plot" for the resurgence of violence. This, or "banditry," has long been the preferred line. His ambassador to Egypt, meanwhile, assured a newspaper interviewer in Cairo that the army is dealing with the residues of the homegrown Islamic Salvation Front. Algerian newspapermen, reflecting a range of sources inside the government and military, reported variations on these explanations. The U.S. ambassador in Algiers, for his part, is convinced al Qaeda is to blame.

The truth is that all of the above are mutually compatible. There are surely foreign fighters in Algeria, and have been since the late 1980s, when bearded, wide-pantalooned "Afghans" began to be reported by security forces. Some really were Afghans, others were Algerian kids who had paid their dues and got their political and military training in the anti-Soviet war. But the locals have never mixed easily with their foreign accomplices. A top Algerian Islamist named Hassan Hattab recently surrendered after protracted negotiations, underscoring a divergence of both strategy and tactics with the al Qaeda-Maghreb lot. Hiding

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in the Sahara and the Sahel, the operatives of the Maghreb al Qaeda know they are in no position at present to take over Algeria, and in any case they view that as the parochial objective of small-minded locals like Hassan Hattab. They take a longer view.

To the south, they see the vast regions of African Islam. To the north, they see the land they still call Andalus. Someday, they know, they will emerge like avenging angels from their desert redoubts, the Koran in one hand, the sword in the other, and give the infidel his due.

Which is precisely why the American infidel would like to keep al Qaeda confined to the dunes. For the past several years, a containment policy in all but name has done just that. The Algerians, our tactical allies in this task, can be prickly, difficult. We send new surveillance and communication equipment, and teams to train local forces in their use and to back them up on long-range patrols. But the Algerians have nixed the U.S. suggestion of a permanent base in the region for the new U.S. Africa Command, which at present is still operating out of Europe Command in Stuttgart, Germany. Nevertheless, on the whole, the policy has been successful—so far. In coordination with the State Department and other agencies, the Defense Department seeks to defeat the enemy while making ourselves attractive to the locals.

The operatives of the Maghreb al Qaeda know they are in no position to take over Algeria, but they view that as the parochial objective of small-minded locals.

The Maghreb al Qaeda, whoever they really are, are trying to do the same thing, by sharing the grievances of the indigenous peoples and playing them off against their distant governments. Quite apart from wanting to make friends and influence people, no one can function in the Sahara without help from the locals. These, for the most part, are Tuareg camel herdsmen and highwaymen who are not in the jihad business and never have been. They are cigarette smugglers, eco-tourist kidnappers, tent-dwellers. They wrap themselves in blue linen against the sun and the sand. In the early years of colonialism, they made sport of French and Spanish military explorers who ventured into their sand sea and left their bones to bleach on its reefs.

Trapped between Algeria, Mali, and Niger, despised and neglected by governments, for most practical purposes stateless, their herds decimated by the long Sahelian drought, the Tuaregs are like Apaches in the Arizona deserts at the turn of the last century—fighting for their lives and their livelihoods against forces completely beyond their understanding. They trust no one—and there is no reason why they should. As recently as September, a C-130 transport, flying U.S. Special Forces to the rescue of a Malian garrison which the local Tuaregs proposed to turn into barbecue, was almost downed by riflemen on camelback.

An important test of our willingness to learn how to fight a long war—which experts assure us we are facing no matter what the outcome in Iraq—is thus to be found in this vast sand sea and the countries that surround it. How much time will we give ourselves to learn the mores and the languages of the peoples in these parts? How much frustration are we willing to put up with?

In the past year the Algerian government reportedly signed off on a $7 billion contract to upgrade its air force. The happy salesman? Vladimir Putin. Annoying? Perhaps. But can we, profligate sons of the West, complain? We want the Algerians to defeat their Islamists. This is a complicated fight, as the Hassan Hattab case demonstrates. Will the Islamists focus on the regime in Algiers or concentrate on the larger pan-Islamist war? Will they send a commando to kill a heretic like Bouteflika, or find a front man to take a ministerial portfolio, knowing he'll be marked by the security police? We Americans have to understand that this is the background against which our tactical allies maneuver for advantage—and for survival. Maybe airpower will help them more than rule-of-law seminars and other measures to win hearts and minds funded (to the tune of a mere $200 million) by our Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership. Perhaps, too, strong air forces make good neighbors.

For the time being, Abdelaziz Bouteflika is in charge. He enjoys the support of French president Nicolas Sarkozy, who is acutely aware of Algeria's value as a trading partner and its importance to one of his key foreign policy schemes, a Mediterranean Union, presumably including Turkey and Israel, on the model of the EU and serving as both buffer and bridge to the Middle East. It is true that Bouteflika has health problems, but so have many other statesmen. Then there's the awkward fact that the Algerian constitution limits him to two terms, ending in 2009. To remove this obstacle, the president is working on a constitutional amendment. Who can say—Bouteflika's remaining in office might represent some valuable stability, much as we like to think constitutional predictability is the best kind. As we juggle the challenges of keeping the lid on a vast region while staying on good terms with its most powerful country, discretion may well prove to be, as it usually has in U.S.-Algerian relations, a necessary part of wisdom. ♦

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The Mythical Clinton

Billy, we knew ye too well

BY NOEMIE EMERY

Bill Clinton in Ukraine, 1995

MCNAMEE WALLY / CORBIS SYGMA

Nigel Hamilton is an excitable sort. People who read *JFK: Reckless Youth*, the first and, as it turned out, the only book in a projected multi-tome life of John Kennedy, understand that he is a writer given to great hates and great crushes, vast and unstoppable waves of emotion that go on and on to great length.

His crush in that first book was on one Inga Arvad, the World War II flame of Lieutenant Kennedy shortly before he went off to the Solomon Islands for the rendezvous with destiny and the Japanese navy which would come in handy years later in the runs for political office that he never thought at the time he would make. A sex-bomb/earth-mother, a Danish edition of Sophia Loren, she impressed Hamilton even more than JFK, and the hot breath soon rose out of the pages as he detailed her remarkable attributes and the course of that intense and ill-starred romance.

The *bête noire* was Joseph P. Kennedy Sr., known to history as a man of crude ways and dreadful political judgment, but portrayed here as a figure of endless malevolence. His name seldom appeared without being attached to a long string of unflattering adjectives, and he was likened to Stalin, a tyrant and murderer whose similar first name was described as highly significant. At one point, on the basis of no grounds whatever, it was implied that Kennedy *père* molested his retarded daughter, and had her lobotomized to keep the truth hidden. It was, perhaps, at this point that the Kennedys withdrew their support, making the first book the last of the series. No one will need to ask why.

Bill Clinton
Mastering the Presidency
by Nigel Hamilton
PublicAffairs, 766 pp., $32

This warns but does not prepare you for what you will find in the second of what will undoubtedly be a full three-volume life of Bill Clinton, as neither the former president nor anyone close to him will find a thing about which to complain. In the Kennedy book, Inga Arvad and Joe Kennedy were not central figures, and did not completely unbalance the story. In this book, one's luck does not hold. In this one, the crush is Bill Clinton himself, and the *bêtes noires* are his enemies—the racists, bigots, primates, low-lives, KKK rejects, and cross and/or heretic burners—who constitute the modern conservative movement and who,

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largely for reasons of sexual jealousy, focused their wrath on poor Bill.

The result is neither a case nor a narrative, but rather an adjective dump, in which truckloads of words—all meaning the same thing, and sometimes the same words, used over and over—are trundled over to the appropriate objects and unloaded on them, in a torrent of excess and overkill. If your politics are of the MoveOn.org genre, and your taste in literature is an Al Gore tirade mixed with the gushings of Barbara Cartland, then this is a book you will cherish. If not, you have been warned.

In theory, this is a fall-and-rise story, taking Clinton from his inauguration in 1993 through his early misjudgments and setbacks, through the crushing rebuke in the 1994 midterm election, to his recovery in 1995 after the bombing in Oklahoma City and his reelection the following year. In the event, it is an old-fashioned morality story, framed as a battle of epic proportions between the forces of evil and goodness, the former being "the cynical, self-centered, brazen, often hypocritical Republican ethos . . . the right wing trash machine . . . the white, re-incarnated, K-K-K fundamentalists . . . [practicing a] religious, right-wing ideology, such as was being practiced in Iran."

As the author explains, "Newt Gingrich, and other conservatives had created an alliance of anti-everything . . . anti-tax, anti-abortion, anti-welfare, anti-national health care reform, anti-weapons ban, anti-environmental protection, anti-education, anti-public broadcasting, anti-civil rights," a "sullen, unseen intifada" composed of "extremists and die-hard opponents" who "revelled in sneering rhetoric and malicious character assassination . . . even in these toughest of times for a leader trying to do his job in the White House while assailed daily by hate-mongers on radio, in the press, and in pulpits of the far right."

In Hamilton's eyes, it was this spirit that infused Timothy McVeigh, architect of the massacre at Oklahoma City, "a Christian-raised terrorist, no less fanatical and murderous than the Muslim extremists," as well as Eric Rudolph, instigator of the bombing plot at the 1996 Olympic Games at Atlanta, described here as "an anti-government, anti-gay, anti-abortion fundamentalist" who later shot and killed a guard at an abortion clinic and was linked to a Georgia militia group that had been raided months earlier, one of whose members ("a bankrupt self-employed electrician") went by the name "Starr." In a short section entitled "The Two Starrs," this misfit is linked to Kenneth Starr, the independent counsel whose investigations unearthed Clinton's dalliance with an overripe intern. Clinton's lies about which led to the impeachment unpleasantness.

It was hardly Clinton's fault, but it was his fate to preside over the least consequential presidency since that of Calvin Coolidge.

If Joseph Stalin and Joseph P. Kennedy are linked in infamy by having a first name in common—the main difference being the 30 million-plus deaths caused by the Soviet leader—the "Two Starrs" are linked by a similar logic. If you find this kind of thinking persuasive, you will be moved, even thrilled, by this book.

And you will be moved even more by Nigel Hamilton's portrait of Bill Clinton, described (after a few early, well-meaning stumbles) as a sort of Sun King/genius, capable of instilling reverence in casual onlookers, and reducing world leaders to awe. Actually, no one ever seems to have said he was stricken by awe and/or reverence, but this is no problem for Hamilton, who simply assumes it, and writes it as if it were true.

Among the many things the author finds true of Clinton are these:

> The middle-aged political genius, the smartest man ever to occupy the Oval Office in the twentieth century. . . .
>
> The president's charisma was undiminished, his charm overwhelming . . .
>
> Abroad, leaders marveled at President Clinton's articulate grasp of the issues confronting the modern world. . . .
>
> Responding to [the bombings at Oklahoma City] the young president grew a foot taller as he began his new role. . . . Never had the young president, at forty-nine, sounded more like his admired predecessor, JFK, or sounded more like President Reagan. . . .
>
> Rising in the Royal Gallery of the House of Lords . . . it was clear that the former Yank at Oxford had, like Dwight Eisenhower before him, earned the respect and even adulation of a country not his own. . . .
>
> His dynamic commitment to reconciliation and collective security brought back memories of JFK at his most inspiring. . . .
>
> In Europe and the wider world, Bill Clinton was now seen as a visionary president, a man who had at last found a key to the future of modern liberal democracy. . . .

And at his 1996 State of the Union address: "It was difficult for most congressmen and senators not to be swept along by the President's sheer vision of a better society. . . . Viewers across the country watched, awed, [as he] articulated those democratic values with . . . the same easy sincerity that Ronald Reagan had employed."

Brighter even than Theodore Roosevelt, more beloved than Ike, Reagan, and Kennedy, faster than a speeding bullet—this Super Bill doesn't ring true. A graceful speech at the site of a terrible tragedy—"The final coming of age of the young president, in the same way as Cuba had been for JFK"—is not the same thing as threading the needle between a fatal concession and nuclear showdown. Clinton did not come to Britain as the man who freed Europe. As a menace, the Republican Congress was not in the same league as Hitler

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("Appeasing Newt Gingrich—would be like Neville Chamberlain's attempt to placate the Führer"). And the threat posed by the now-forgotten militia movement of the mid-1990s was not quite the same thing as the threat to the Union posed by secession in 1861: "The time had come for the president, like Lincoln, to challenge the 'mobocratic spirit' threatening the nation," Hamilton intones at one point in his story. "America, the president felt, was in danger of coming apart."

But the country, of course, was in no danger of anything, which is the main flaw of this book. Hamilton wants to see Clinton as a great man, facing terrible enemies, at a climactic moment in American history, with life-and-death matters at stake. The problem is that Clinton is not a great man, his foes were not evil (or all that effective), we were at that time on our vacation from history, and the only crises he faced—impeachment, and the loss of Congress in the 1994 midterms—were of his own making.

Most of his instincts were sound, and he did preside over a splendid economy; but he did not have to rescue the country from a Depression, and while he eventually did the right thing in Kosovo, the foreign policy problems he faced never threatened the country's security. It was hardly his fault, but it was his fate to preside over the least consequential presidency since that of Calvin Coolidge, the first one in 70 years when the country was not imperiled by internal economic depression or foreign dictatorship, by the balance of terror, by nuclear warfare, or hot or cold war.

The fact remains that the worst day Bill Clinton faced would have been a day at the beach for John Kennedy, and that nothing Clinton did in his lifetime approaches the stature of Dwight Eisenhower's pre-Oval Office career. Only a crush of major proportions could have led Hamilton to equate Kosovo with the invasion of Normandy, or think that the reception given an affable young leader by the British was the same as the one given the man who had helped to free Europe, and lifted the spectre of dread from their land.

As to his talents, Clinton was unmistakably the best politician to live in his decade, but the competition he mastered was, to say the least, underwhelming: His Democratic primary opponents were eccentric, minor league talents; the Republican congressional leaders had a genius for inverse publicity; and the Republicans he faced for the presidency were a generation older than he was, visibly tired, and markedly lacking in marketing skills.

He was better on defense than on offense, better at tactics than strategy, and even his notable triumphs had an ambiguous side. He won two solid electoral victories, but failed each time to win a majority; his party lost ground during his two terms in office; his heir and vice president could not succeed him in office. His party, so far, has repudiated his legacy: There are today no Clinton Democrats, not even his wife. Nor were his rivals as evil as Hamilton claims. Some of his opponents in Congress were a little bit strange (as were some of his allies) but they were hardly satanic, and Hamilton ignores completely the large bloc of Republican governors—many of them in "blue" Northern states—who were the authors of important reforms in the 1980s and '90s and did much of the spade work for the welfare reform bill that Clinton signed in 1996, that helped reelect him, and became his most notable legacy.

If your politics are of the MoveOn.org genre, and your taste in literature is an Al Gore tirade mixed with the gushings of Barbara Cartland, then this is a book you will cherish.

While Hamilton portrays the political scene of the 1990s as one of head-banging hostility between the Democrats and the KKK party (aka the Republicans), it was also the time when centrists of both parties came together to pass NAFTA and welfare reform, rein in the deficit, and otherwise set the stage for the prosperity that was Clinton's largest achievement. It is notable that the boom in the stock market, which would quadruple while Clinton was president, only began after the 1994 midterm elections, when domestic policy became a two-party affair.

As a man and a president, Bill Clinton had many good qualities: He was intelligent, resilient, empathetic, and a genuine policy wonk on serious issues, with generous instincts towards people *en masse*. But he was also undisciplined, self-centered, greedy, and petulant, which cost him the respect of a great many people, and kept him from being loved—as were Eisenhower, Reagan, and Kennedy, who had faults of their own, but not those. As a result, outside of his base, affection for him was frequently tempered by exasperation. Towards the end of his reign, his high ratings for job performance were coupled with low ones for character, and the public judgment on his impeachment years later seems to be that impeachment followed by acquittal was probably what he deserved.

The question of why Clinton was so much better after 1994, when he faced a hostile Republican Congress, than he was in the two years when he was untrammeled, is explained by the shape of his character: He was so undisciplined that he needed restraints, like a racehorse with blinkers, to focus his mind on the track. Once restrained, and given someone to oppose and play off, he was truly formidable—though he did not defeat Congress so much as co-opt it, and work out a synergy between their agendas, of which the public appeared to approve.

The 1990s were not a great age, and they did not produce heroes, merely gifted men with large flaws, such as Bill Clinton and Newt Gingrich, who nonetheless did some good for the country. They and their age deserve an accounting. Alas, they will not find it here. ♦

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Speaking of Politics

Orwell matters, but he wasn't always right.

BY BARTON SWAIM

George Orwell was the greatest political essayist since William Hazlitt, and like Hazlitt's, his essays delight even when they're wrong. Probably Orwell's most famous essay is "Politics and the English Language" (1946), a rambling and deliciously witty attack on writers who allow political clichés and other varieties of formulaic balderdash to do their thinking for them. One writer, he says, "knows more or less what he wants to say, but an accumulation of stale phrases chokes him like tea leaves blocking a sink."

"Politics and the English Language" is worth reading, and probably deserves its place in college writing textbooks, but that's despite rather than because of the fact that it rests on the mistaken premise that abuses of the English language have become more frequent and more flagrant in recent times than they were in some unspecified past. This is untrue, of course, except in the technical sense that more things were written and published in 1946 than 50 or 100 years before, and so more of it was nonsense. Isaac Rosenfeld once observed that Orwell was a "radical in politics and a conservative in feeling," and here Orwell makes an error to which conservatives are naturally prone: that of supposing people have become dumber during a period which happens to coincide with one's adult memory.

But the real trouble with "Politics and the English Language" is attitudinal rather than philosophical or factual. The best way to explain is by quoting a couple of typical references to it from journalists. Here, to take one of countless examples, is the first paragraph of a recent column by John Naughton in the *Observer*, Britain's left-wing Sunday paper:

> "Political language," observed George Orwell in his great essay on "Politics and the English Language," "is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind." Much the same applies to the output of the public relations industry. One of the most important public services that mainstream journalism can provide, therefore, consists of decoding PR-speak: translating its half-truths, unsupported assertions and evasions into plain English.

More often journalists summon Orwell's essay to make objectionable politicians look sinister or ridiculous. Here is Daniel Okrent of the *New York Times*:

> Hijacking the language proves especially pernicious when government officials deodorize their programs with near-Orwellian euphemism. (If Orwell were writing "Politics and the English Language" today, he'd need a telephone book to contain his "catalog of swindles and perversions.") The Bush administration has been especially good at this; just count the number of times self-anointing phrases like "Patriot Act," "Clear Skies Act" or "No Child Left Behind Act" appear in *The Times*, at each appearance sounding as wholesome as a hymn. [Does Okrent remember the Violence Against Women Act or the Educational Excellence for All Children Act? And should the Civil Rights Act have been given a more impartial title?] Even the most committed Republicans must recognize that such phrases could apply to measures guaranteeing the opposite of what they claim to accomplish.

Leave aside, if you can, the loathsome prose (hijacking proves pernicious when officials deodorize programs). Okrent seems sincerely to believe that the preemptive titles legislators give their bills are able somehow to coax people into supporting or thinking favorably of them. Indeed, both these writers entertain the same fear; namely, that a large part of the general population can be manipulated by the clever or cynical use of words—turned this way and that as a drayhorse responds to "gee" and "haw." Mind you, Okrent and Naughton aren't *themselves* fooled by the semiotic tricks of the powerful. It's other people they're worried about.

The passage from Orwell's essay most often quoted is this one:

> The word *Fascism* has now no meaning except in so far as it signifies "something not desirable." The words *democracy*, *socialism*, *freedom*, *patriotic*, *realistic*, *justice* have each of them several different meanings which cannot be reconciled with one another. . . . Words of this kind are often used in a consciously dishonest way. That is, the person who uses them has his own private definition, but allows his hearer to think he means something quite different. Statements like *Marshal Pétain was a true patriot*, *The Soviet press is the freest in the world*, *The Catholic Church is opposed to persecution*, are almost always made with intent to deceive. Other words used in variable meanings, in most cases more or less dishonestly, are: *class*, *totalitarian*, *science*, *progressive*, *reactionary*, *bourgeois*, *equality*.

Now, it's easy to sympathize with Orwell's outrage. Any literate person who follows politics with even cursory attention will have experienced the nausea brought on by hearing vacuous or obviously false statements made in such a way as to disguise rather than express what the speaker knows to be true. It's essential to remember, though, that this kind of rhetorical sleight-of-hand, the deliberate separation of words and phrases from their meanings, doesn't convince people who don't already agree. People by and large aren't impressed by transparent lies: That's what makes them transparent. And this is true even in societies

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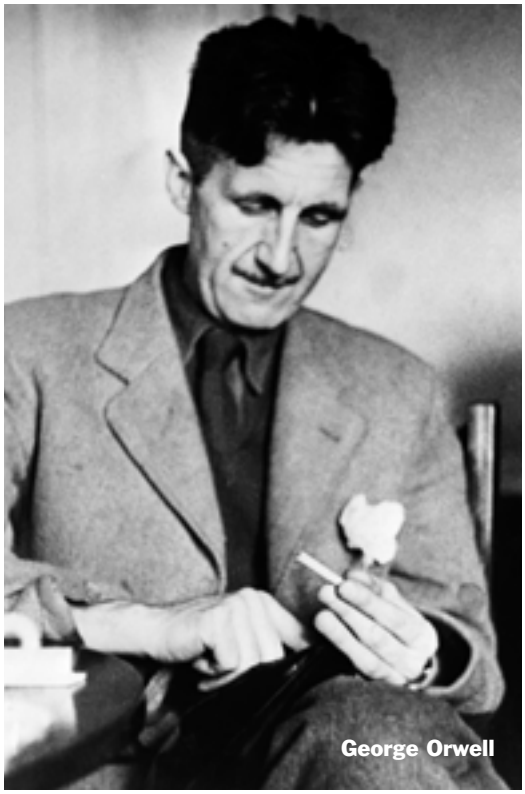
in which the state exercises, or attempts to exercise, total control over what can be said and published. That people in such societies wearily acquiesce to lies doesn't mean they believe them.

Yet journalists and intellectuals often find it irresistible to believe that most people lack the mental means to see through the skulduggery of modern politics. In their view, politicians—or at least those politicians of whom they disapprove—are apt to "hijack the language," to use Okrent's phrase. Or take Naughton's high-minded description of journalism's function: "One of the most important public services that mainstream journalism can provide," he thinks, is that of "translating" the "half-truths, unsupported assertions and evasions" of "PR-speak." The disdain apparent in that remark is spectacular. It's a form of disdain that lurks behind "Politics and the English Language," too.


George Orwell

BETTMANN / CORBIS

Just look at the sentence quoted by Naughton—incompletely quoted, I should say, for it reads in full: "Political language—and with variations this is true of all political parties, from Conservatives to Anarchists—is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind." Orwell enjoyed overstating himself, and likely didn't literally believe that "all political parties" were in the business of making "murder respectable." What he certainly did believe, however, was that clever people could control an entire population by means of linguistic trickery. That belief is evident in *Animal Farm* and, most conspicuously, in *1984*.

It would be easy to update Orwell's famous observation that "*Fascism* has now no meaning except in so far as it signifies 'something not desirable.'" We can all think of terms used so promiscuously for political ends that their meanings have become too flexible to be useful. Often, though, this says as much about our own political opinions as about anything else. The reason for this has to do with the double standard we apply to political pronouncements. I am prepared to tolerate an element of ambiguity or logical sloppiness in a statement made by a politician with whom I have great sympathy for the simple reason that I already think he's right. In my mind, the rightness of his statement excuses whatever tergiversations he feels he must employ to make his position more acceptable to the public.

However, I expect absolute clarity and precision from the politician with whom I have little or no sympathy, and if he says something vague or illogical, I will interpret it as vague or illogical, and think poorly of those who excuse its vagueness or illogic on political grounds. The point is that those, like Orwell, who believe politicians are manipulating great numbers of people by means of shrewdly concocted rhetoric are missing a basic truth about democratic culture. Political opinion follows empty rhetoric; empty rhetoric doesn't alter, and certainly doesn't dictate, political opinion. Although a bold and original pronouncement may persuade its hearers, a tawdry one (of the kind bemoaned by Orwell) merely boosts morale among the committed.

People whose job it is to put words together—journalists, intellectuals—will never believe this. They can't. It's too gratifying for them to believe that wordsmiths are ultimately in charge. Thus, the Berkeley linguistician George Lakoff has convinced a large proportion of the Democratic party that Republicans have maintained power for such an unaccountably long time by simply reworking a few phrases to their advantage: "Death tax" instead of inheritance tax, "tax relief" instead of "tax cut," "pro-life" instead of "anti-abortion," and so on. Similarly the British political writer Robert Fisk thinks American politicians have managed to sell what he, Fisk, thinks are obviously inhumane policies in the Middle East by the judicious use of a single word, "terrorism." And of course, there are huge numbers of intellectuals who believe the phrase "war on terrorism" is a magnificent hoax perpetrated on an imbecilic electorate.

It's strange that George Orwell, so dismissive of those whom he derided as "intellectuals," should have adopted essentially the same attitude. His failure in that regard is at least partly the result of his constitutional gloominess ("the most hopeless person I ever met and probably the most unhappy," one friend said of him). And Orwell's experience in the Spanish Civil War certainly darkened his view of modern politics: He had seen the propaganda of Spanish Communists reported in England as truth, and their brutality ignored altogether. Whatever his reasons, he couldn't reconcile himself to the possibility that average people weren't gullible boobs. That is, to some degree, why he hated the left-wing intelligentsia of which he was so uncomfortable a part: He felt that they used their talent for words to mislead decent and patriotic people with the empty verbiage of moral equivalence.

In this, he had more in common with the intellectuals he despised than he thought. ♦

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Subcontinental Drift

Is India's past a guide to its future?

BY LISA SINGH

"The President has proclaimed Emergency. This is nothing to panic about."

Those words, spoken in 1975 by India's prime minister, Indira Gandhi, on state-controlled radio, confirmed every dour prediction that Western critics had been making. For decades, their thinking had gone something like this: Because its people were so divided along the lines of caste, religion, and language, India would eventually cave to autocratic rule.

Now, barely 30 years into the country's life, it looked as if those predictions were already coming to pass. Faced with corruption charges, as well as mounting national strikes and violence over her failed campaign promise to end poverty, Indira Gandhi suspended democracy. Over the next 19 months, up to thousands of political opponents were imprisoned, forced sterilizations of the poor occurred, and the lights of independent newsrooms were cut off.

There was, in fact, everything to panic about. And yet, the middle class hardly raised a peep—this, in contrast to pre-independence days when Mahatma Gandhi had successfully rallied thousands of teachers, judges, and lawyers to resign their positions in protest of British rule.

When bits of dissension toward Indira managed to reach the public surface, it did so in crafty little ways. In one journal, *Eastern Economist*, an article entitled "Livestock Problems in India" began, "There are at present 580 million sheep in the country"—a thinly veiled jab at India's population at the time. Away from the censors, in the West, V.S. Naipaul offered the harshest assessment of all: "Archaic India can provide no substitutes for press, parliament, and courts." The crisis, he wrote, "is not only political or economic . . . but of a wounded old civilization that has at long last become aware of its inadequacies and is without the intellectual means to move ahead."

India After Gandhi
The History of the World's Largest Democracy
by Ramachandra Guha
Ecco, 912 pp., $34.95

But move ahead it has. In the years since its only brush with autocratic rule ended, India has, in the words of columnist Thomas Friedman, traded in its image as a "country of snake charmers, poor people, and Mother Teresa" for one of "brainy people and computer wizards." And while the population now tops one billion people, it doesn't generate nearly as many despairing, or disparaging, headlines as it did in the past—headlines like "India: A Huge Country on the Verge of Collapse."

These days, if there's anyone with a crisis, it may well be you and your computer with the virus in it. Fear not; "Nancy" over in Bangalore will walk you through it.

India isn't just *taking* calls, however. Backed by its booming software industry, it's now spoken of, in turns, as a "global leader" and "economic powerhouse," slated to become the third largest economy by 2040. Most compelling, despite the premature obits, as well as religious riots, insurgencies, and assassinations, India turned 60 in August, still holding on to its title of "world's largest democracy." It is this improbable resilience, this story of a "wounded old civilization" beating the odds, which Ramachandra Guha explores here.

Naturally, any claim of having written *the* history of a country so young, and so subject to extreme forecasts—the alarmist reports of the past, today's "global champ" accolades—carries its share of hazards. Conceding as much, Guha, one of India's best-known historians and citizen of what he sometimes calls the "most exasperating country in the world," plays it safe, going light on the exasperation (or praise) and heavy on a dry, chronological retelling culled from a "capacious repository" of private papers, periodicals, and books.

Unfortunately, *India After Gandhi* then falls prey to encyclopedia-talk and such unforgivable phrases as "at this stage, circa 1989-1990." Rarely does this approach spark any expansive discussion of the country's cultural and religious life; religion, instead, is largely relegated to the category of "Hindu chauvinism," against which secularism is the only option. Most glaringly, Guha offers barely a word about the most intriguing aspect of modern India's story: why Mahatma Gandhi, "the Father of the Nation," the man who shares the book's title, has come to figure so little in the country's imagination. This omission speaks to an ultimate weakness: a lack of reflection.

What a shame, when modern India's story is all about the wrangling that has accompanied its search for unifying principles. Here, in some respects, India's venture into democracy bears comparison to America's. Like the American post-revolutionary model, in which the schools of political thought advanced by Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton were often in conflict, modern India's founding leaders were not always of the same mind. Like Jefferson, Gandhi embraced an agrarian ideal. The "real India," he once said, could be found in its villages, not in the cities, which were "influenced by the West." He advocated a decentralized form of government in which the village would serve as the main unit of governance.

But just as Jefferson's vision had its

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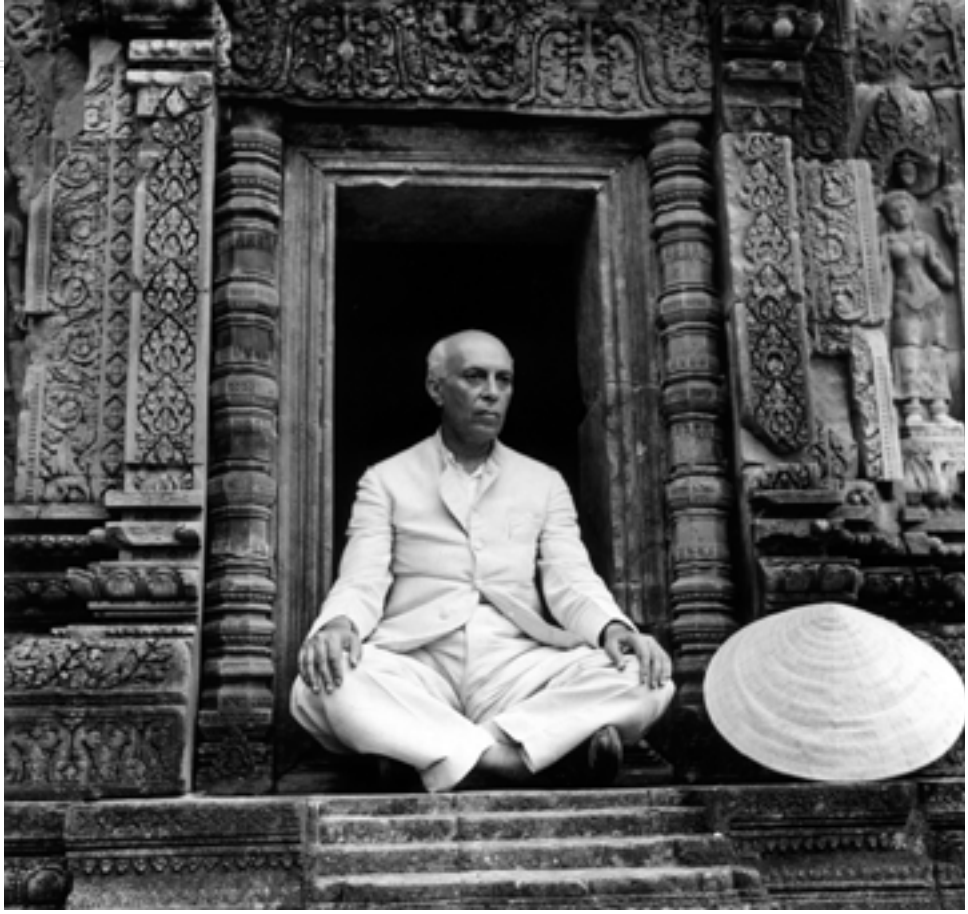
critics (including Hamilton), so, too, did Gandhi's. The fiercest was B.R. Ambedkar, the chief architect of India's constitution, and "untouchable" by birth.

"The love of the intellectual Indian for the village community is, of course, infinite, if not pathetic," he said, and famously added, "What is the village but a sink of localism, a den of ignorance, narrow-mindedness and communalism?"

Still, India never did find a pragmatic counterweight to Gandhi's vision, not the way the United States did in Hamilton and his belief that the "spirit of commerce" could rein in those "inflammable humors, which have so often kindled into wars." In a land of dizzying social complexity—about 20 recognized languages, 1,600 dialects, 3,000 castes (plus 25,000 sub-castes), not to mention significant minority groups like Muslims and Sikhs—the man at the helm for its first 17 years was Jawaharlal Nehru. A "sentimental socialist," as Guha calls him, Nehru endorsed state democracy and a free press, along with a sizable bureaucracy, which included generous set-asides for tribals and lower castes. Meanwhile, the country's closed, state-controlled economy grew at an average annual rate of just 3 percent, earning it the label "Hindu rate of growth." But to his credit, as Guha notes, Nehru took the idea of an opposition seriously, unlike his daughter Indira, who stated, "Sometimes I wish we had a real revolution—like France or Russia—at the time of independence."

With the Emergency, she got her wish—at least temporarily. When she finally restored democracy, following entreaties in the British press, a correspondent for the *Guardian* wrote, "Democracy can only survive if there is economic progress and reform." And these days, excitement abounds. Spurred largely by the economic liberalization of 1991, India's economy has been growing at around 6 percent a year. (To be fair, Nehru's insistence that English be the major language of the country's educational system has given India a big competitive edge.)



Jawaharlal Nehru in Indonesia, 1954

GETTY IMAGES

Of course, there's still plenty of poverty: A third of the population lives below the poverty line, but that's down 10 percent from the early '90s. And while the caste system is still deeply entrenched, we're hearing more proclamations like this, from the chairman of Microsoft Corp.'s India unit, who recently told the *Wall Street Journal*: "We don't give a damn about any of these differences in caste or religion. . . . Talent [is] the number one issue for all companies."

As always, however, if you want to ring the alarm about India, there's still plenty of cause. The famed IT sector only employs about one million people, this in a country where over 700 million people still live in villages and where, over the past decade, at least 10,000 farmers have actually committed suicide in the midst of a bewildering, shifting new economy. The specter of AIDS looms, as does Hindu nationalism. "Government" and "corruption" are often uttered in the same breath, while almost a quarter of India's 545 members of parliament have been indicted for one or more crimes. The list goes on.

You would think, then, that Guha's restraint in chronicling India's past and future is understandable, even commendable. But it is not enough to recapitulate the trials and tribulations of this vibrant nation; to be instructive, you must ask the difficult questions of how India will fare, not only politically or economically, but socially and religiously in the midst of a rapacious world economy. If you doubt that such questions arise in the mainstream of Indian society, I have, on a number of occasions during my visits been asked, by Indian professionals, "Do you believe in God?"

To consider that the India of today inspires such a question is to wonder if the India of tomorrow will have a response that reflects the values of the past, living in harmony with the realities of the future. Guha opens the door to such consideration, but does not open it quite wide enough to give us a glimpse of an answer. ♦

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Kitty Cassidy

Lost in Ireland

A window on the mystery of the Travellers.

BY JOSEPH LINDSLEY

Freud once griped that the Irish are a "race of people for whom psychoanalysis is of no use whatsoever." Encountering Alen MacWeeney's collection of photographs, songs, and stories about the nomads of Ireland, you might concur. In the 1960s, photographer MacWeeney entered the world of the Irish tinkers—or "Travellers," as we must now call them so as not to offend their delicate egos. With a camera and tape recorder, he captured the sights and sounds of these itinerants in a camp called Cherry Orchard, a forlorn dump outside of Dublin. Over 40 years later, he has published his experiences in a sleek volume with black-and-white photographs of Travellers and a CD of their music, drawing you into a strange and depressing, yet somehow beguiling, world.

Irish Travellers
Tinkers No More
by Alen MacWeeney
New England College Press,
132 pp., $60

Joseph Lindsley is the professional development director at the Collegiate Network.

A wandering people with their own language (Gammon, related to Irish and Hiberno-English), Travellers traditionally roved the bucolic Irish roads in colorful horsedrawn caravans. Called tinkers because of their work creating products made of tin, they were also typically horse traders. When Irish law banned Travellers from squatting along roadsides, they quit traveling and hunkered down in designated fields outside of towns.

Today, it would seem that they lead fairly miserable lives, sucking the teat of the welfare state in their decrepit camps or singing for a few Euros on Dublin's Grafton Street. Yet their songs and stories, as presented by MacWeeney, suggest a presence of sweetness. The CD transports you into the world of the Irish music session, as if you had just happened upon a country pub or a camp of Travellers in a moonlit glen. Upbeat jigs-and-reels are interrupted by piercing laments, usually sung by a young woman, before the clapping and dancing begins again.

Are they happy or dolorous, Dr. Freud? Who knows? You'll see a photo of Kitty Cassidy, singing with eyes closed, baby in hand, in a pub, and you'll wonder whether she is the same young woman whose tender, yet confident and defiant rendition of "The Patriot Game" you hear on the CD. In the background, a baby cries—one of many reminders that these sounds were not recorded in a studio. After a particularly well-executed refrain, you'll hear an elder approvingly say, "Ah, lovely now"—the timid Irish, Travellers or not, need encouragement to sing in public, no matter how good their voices.

A number of the book's tales, spoken and sung, and often full of blarney, concern the origins of the Travellers. Are they descended from the Irish gentry ripped from the land by Oliver Cromwell? Were they destined to a roving life after using their tinkering skills to make the nails that crucified Christ? Sometimes, in more philosophical moments, tinker music postulates that we all are Travellers, no matter how settled we think ourselves.

Listening to a woman sing "My Rifle, My Pony, and Me"—which Dean Martin and Ricky Nelson famously sang in the John Wayne film *Rio Bravo*—is an occasion to ponder what makes some people, from Western cowboys to frequent fliers, take to the road. The CD's final song, "The Blue Tar Road," raises the significance of roving to pretty high heights:

"*Out here in Cherry Orchard, no cherry blossoms bloom*," sings an unidentified man. "*Forgotten and unwanted in dirt and muck and gloom, / But the man above who died for love on a crooked gallows tree, / Sure wasn't he a Traveller, the same as you and me*."

One of MacWeeney's more striking shots is of Nell Ward, perhaps five years old—her intense glare suggesting that, despite her youth, she has a view toward the troubles that lie ahead, or maybe she is wondering why someone is taking her picture. Other photos are whimsical, such as that of Dan Flynn, son of Big Miley Flynn (described as "something of a terror"), with a cat sitting on his cap and another on his shoulder. Many

ALEN MACWEENEY

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photos display hardship, though rarely do the dirty faces look despairing. Some pictures highlight their irresponsibility: The cover photo, with a wagon and caravan in a field, focuses on a young girl holding cellophane over her face—not a bright idea.

They may lack formal schooling, but Travellers are often well-trained in the art of conversation because their culture relies upon each generation orally transmitting tales from the past. But tinker culture is in decline, with crime among the Travellers rising around their camps. With Ireland prospering, young Travellers who refuse to live the criminal life are inclined to quit poverty and join the ranks of the settled—though even settled Travellers often maintain their distinct traditions of singing and storytelling. Since MacWeeney visited them in the 1960s, a few Traveller families, such as the Fureys, have become popular folk music acts.

If you see horsedrawn caravans in Ireland today, they are likely driven by foreigners who've hired the wagons for a fortnight to rough it like the ramblers of old. If you're not much of a traveler yourself, and prefer to enter the culture from your armchair, pint in hand, MacWeeney's book and CD would do the trick, though you might prefer to browse it on a sunny day. ♦

Post Toastie

Before Katharine Graham, there was Dorothy Schiff of the Post. **BY ARNOLD BEICHMAN**

Up to the 1960s New York City boasted seven English language major dailies: the *New York Times* and its rival, the *Herald Tribune*, and the *New York Post*, the *Daily Mirror*, the *Daily News*, the *Journal-American*, and the *World-Telegram*. The *Post*, the *News*, and the *Mirror* were tabloids; the *New York World* had gone out of business in 1931. The rest were "broadsheets," the much larger format. Only three metropolitan dailies have survived into the new century: the *Times*, the *Daily News*, and the *Post*.

The Lady Upstairs
Dorothy Schiff and the New York Post
by Marilyn Nissenson
St. Martin's, 512 pp., $29.95

(In the interests of full disclosure: In my youth I was a campus correspondent for the *Post*, earlier a copy boy at the *Herald Tribune*, and later a contributor to the *New York Times Magazine*.)

I would say that the survival of the *New York Post* is a miracle, and that Dorothy Schiff, the millionaire descendant of a wealthy German-Jewish immigrant banker family, is the reason. (Her grandfather, Jacob Schiff, was so important a New York banker that the boulevard-wide Delancey Street on the Lower East Side was renamed Schiff Parkway. But nobody paid any attention to the name change, and Delancey Street it remains to this day.) *The Lady Upstairs* tells why the *Post* was able to survive, even though it was regarded with disdain by advertisers. In fact, when a *Post* advertising salesman once asked a department store executive why he wasn't advertising in the *Post*, the executive famously replied, "Because your readers are our shoplifters."

Dorothy Schiff (1903-1989) was the owner and publisher of the *Post* for 37 years before it was sold to Rupert Murdoch in 1977 for $30 million. The *Post* at that point was the only surviving afternoon daily in New York, and she was one of the few women publishers of an important American newspaper. Schiff was a tallish, attractive woman with great legs, which she delighted in showing off. She dressed to kill. Theodore W. Kheel, the famed labor mediator, watched her toughing it out during a Newspaper Guild dispute with the New York publishers. In an inelegant turn of phrase, he described Dorothy Schiff as "the only publisher in New York with balls."

True. When the Newspaper Guild threatened to strike, she countered with her threat that, if they did, she would close the paper for good. But she caved when one of her reporters came up with a series of 13 articles about New York supermarkets and how some of them short-weighted their customers or violated city ordinances. Six pieces ran, and the last one was a critical look at phony weekly supermarket specials. At that point a local supermarket chain pulled its full-page ads. Schiff killed the remaining seven installments, and Marilyn Nissenson, who obviously lacks a sense of humor, writes that "Dorothy was fearless in pursuit of new advertisers." The author does not explain what there was to fear.

Schiff was a sharp-tongued wit, according to Gloria Steinem. Nissenson describes a conversation about marriage in which Steinem told the thrice-wed Schiff that she, Steinem, couldn't marry because it would mean moving into the same apartment and "putting all your books and records together." To which Schiff merrily replied, "Well, my dear, that's the difference between you and me. I have a large apartment. They move in and they move out."

By the mid-1950s, the *Post*'s circulation, 420,000, had peaked. (Hearst's *Journal-American* had a circulation of almost 800,000.) In 1960, the *Post*'s circulation, 335,000, was down 25 percent. Why such a drop? Hard to say. Working for her were three of the most talented journalists in the country: James A. Wechsler, editor of the editorial page, columnist Murray Kempton, and Paul Sann, the managing editor. Nissenson credits Sann with saving

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Dorothy Schiff, 1963

BETTMANN / CORBIS

the paper, but it was an uphill battle for the liberal *Post.* Afternoon papers printed in downtown Manhattan were having trouble delivering their closing Wall Street editions uptown because of traffic jams. The *Post* at one point was delivering its Wall Street closing edition to newsstands by subway in order to catch the Grand Central and Penn Station commuters.

Here I would like to offer from memory a two-word description of the *Post*'s dark, dirty, and gloomy city room floor, then located near the confluence of the Hudson and East River waterfronts. Compared with the city room floors of the *Times*, the *Herald Tribune*, and the *World-Telegram*, which I knew from personal observation, the *Post*'s was a slum tenement.

The Lady Upstairs tells of Schiff's friendship—if not more—with Franklin D. Roosevelt, whom she often visited at his homes in Hyde Park and Warm Springs. We will never know the exact nature of their friendship. Marilyn Nissenson cites Ted Morgan, another biographer, as her source for Schiff's conversation with FDR's physician. When asked whether the crippled FDR could be sexually active, the doctor replied: "Don't forget, only his legs are paralyzed." In any case, the *New York Times* published a front-page story on May 27, 1976, under the headline "Dorothy Schiff Tells of Affair with Roosevelt." None of this appeared in Schiff's authorized biography by Jeffrey Potter (*Men, Money & Magic*), and the situation got even more complicated when the *Times* picked up the publisher's press release hinting that Schiff had had an affair with FDR in the 1930s. Threats of a lawsuit forced the *Times* to retract the "exposé."

The survival of the New York Post *is a miracle, and Dorothy Schiff, the millionaire descendant of a wealthy German-Jewish immigrant banker family, is the reason.*

Intelligent though she was, Schiff was blind to the problems of women on the news staff with children. She refused to let new mothers work part-time. One of those reporters recalls: "Dolly had the nerve to tell us, 'I raised three children and worked full time.' Well, sure. Give me your chauffeur, your cook, and your nursemaid and maybe I wouldn't have such a problem. It was a staggering revelation of how removed from the real world she was."

The Schiff era included a major battle in the 1950s between pro-Soviet and anti-Soviet intellectuals in the opinion business. The anti-Soviet intelligentsia, like Schiff and James Wechsler, were prepared to test their anti-Communist political convictions against the elite defenders of Alger Hiss. They were also willing to accept liberal accusations of red-baiting. Wechsler, a target of Senator Joseph McCarthy, wrote a powerful defense of anticommunism in his *Age of Suspicion*, and Schiff gave Wechsler her full support.

Was Schiff a nut case? Her marriage to Ted Thackrey, a newspaperman who became editor of the *Post*, would be evidence for an affirmative answer. Thackrey had absolutely no idea what New York's intellectual wars were about. In the early spring of 1949, when the philosopher Sidney Hook organized a protest against the Stalinist Stockholm Peace Appeal's mass meeting at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, Thackrey accepted an invitation to speak at the conference, and then asked to be allowed to address the Hook meeting! Hook told him that he couldn't dance at two weddings, and asked him to make a choice. He chose the Stalinist conclave. A year earlier, Thackrey had supported Henry Wallace in the 1948 presidential race, a candidacy actively and openly supported by the Communist party. Thackrey's opportunistic politics doomed his future, as far as Schiff was concerned, and in April 1949, Schiff fired him as editor and publisher and, finally, as husband.

Few cities have been as fortunate as New York—or, more specifically, the borough of Manhattan—in their competitive newspapers. And *The Lady Upstairs* tells a fascinating story about a woman who was fortunate and gutsy enough to smash the glass ceiling. ♦

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Blow-Up

An uncharming tale of a troubled young man and his inflatable doll. **BY JOHN PODHORETZ**

In the comic classic *Harvey* (1950), James Stewart played a drunken fellow who claims his best friend is a six-foot-tall invisible rabbit, and is indulged in his fantasy by his frustrated sister. In 1986's terrifying *River's Edge*, Dennis Hopper played a psychotic drug dealer living in a trailer with a blow-up sex doll who helps a group of teenage kids cover up the drug-related death of a friend. In 2007, Ryan Gosling chose to follow up his Best Actor Oscar nomination last year—he was the youngest nominee in the category in the award's 80-year history—with the lead role in a movie that combines all the hilarity of *River's Edge* and all the horror of *Harvey*.

Lars and the Real Girl
Directed by Craig Gillespie

The movie is called *Lars and the Real Girl*. It's about a sweet, vacant, and withdrawn 27-year-old who begins squiring a very expensive and realistic-looking sex doll around the small town where he's lived all his life. He says the doll is his girlfriend, that her name is Bianca, that she is the very religious Brazilian daughter of missionary parents, and that, because of her religious convictions, he and his new girlfriend cannot share quarters. Lars asks his brother Gus and sister-in-law Karin to put Bianca up. If anyone tells Lars that Bianca is made of plastic, he simply doesn't hear the remark.

Gus and Karin, who is pregnant, take Lars to the local doctor, who also has a degree in psychology. The doctor talks to Lars and then informs his family that Lars is suffering from a "delusion"—a diagnosis that evidently required an advanced degree. And said doctor, displaying what screenwriter Nancy Oliver and director Craig Gillespie clearly believe is great wisdom, tells Lars's family to go along with it until there's a way of determining the cause of Lars's delusion. Eventually, everybody in town—an uncommonly glum and grim sort of place that could use a dash of fantasy—goes along with it, too.

Someone wrote *Lars and the Real Girl*. Someone directed it. Someone named Sidney Kimmel—a clothing manufacturer who has decided to become a motion-picture producer—put up the money to make it. Some firm has chosen to distribute it. And it has Ryan Gosling, who showed in *The Notebook* that he has the chops to be an old-fashioned romantic leading man of the sort Hollywood hasn't seen since the 1970s.

What *were* they thinking? What were they drinking/smoking? It would be a relief to know that *Lars and the Real Girl* was actually made because someone was using the production to run a drug-smuggling operation. At least that would offer a rational explanation for the existence of this positively gobstopping piece of work.

Presumably, these people would say that *Lars and the Real Girl* is a movie about love—about how Lars's aching need to love inspires an entire town to an act of self-sacrificing love for one of its own. Still, what we are watching is a man carrying around an anatomically correct sex doll with whom he sometimes has screaming fights in a car in the middle of a forest—even as he is living on the same property with a pregnant woman about to give birth. The doctor tells Lars's brother that he's not schizophrenic or psychopathic; but from what we see, that is exactly what he is. Humoring such a person rather than providing him with real help would not be an act of love but an act of madness in itself that could put a vulnerable woman and an innocent infant in severe jeopardy.

Lars and the Real Girl is so defiantly peculiar that it has managed to cloud the minds of several otherwise sensible movie critics, who are following Lars's delusional example in praising the film that contains him. Some are even offering comparisons to *Little Miss Sunshine*, last year's wonderful and bracing comedy about American losers. What it has in common with *Little Miss Sunshine* is that it is a small-budget independent film that was shown at a few fancy film festivals. What it doesn't have in common with *Little Miss Sunshine* is that it is awful in very nearly every respect—so awful in its alternately disturbing and mundane way, in fact, that it does not even succeed in achieving the camp effect of being unintentionally funny.

Gosling, however, does achieve a landmark of sorts. He delivers what may be the most mannered performance in the history of film. Gosling is *acting* here; oh lord, is he acting. He stammers, bumbles, pulls on his hair, clears his throat, wanders around in a little circle—*every time he has a line of dialogue to speak*. Gosling's actorly touches, his silent moves, add at least five minutes to the movie's running time. And yet not a single thing he does is remotely believable or true.

Gosling is so actorish that, in playing a shy and awkward man, he's furiously, aggressively shy and awkward—which is, of course, exactly the opposite of what a shy and awkward person is really like. This isn't just a bad performance; it is the independent-film version of Laurence Olivier's turn as an Orthodox cantor in Neil Diamond's 1979 version of *The Jazz Singer*—a car wreck for the ages. Perhaps that is why *Lars and the Real Girl* exists: to function as a model, to be used in drama schools, of what not to do as an actor and, in film schools, of how not to make a heartwarming indie. ♦

John Podhoretz is THE WEEKLY STANDARD*'s movie critic.*

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Parody

"Michael Kinsley, whose review of Alan Greenspan's 'Age of Turbulence' begins on Page 12, has a résumé that seems to have been assembled with the express purpose of inspiring awe. At present, he is a columnist for* Time*, but he has also been the editor of the* New Republic *and* Harper's*, the editorial and opinion editor of the* Los Angeles Times*, the American editor of* The Economist *and the founding editor of the online magazine* Slate*. Along with numerous television appearances. . . ."

—Editor's Note, the *New York Times Book Review*, Oct. 14

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HILDREN'S BOOKS READ LIVE

OTABLE NEW YORKERS

FROM THE MIXED-UP FILES OF MRS. BASIL E. FRANKWEILER by E.L. Konigsburg

GREEN EGGS AND HAM by Dr. Seuss

HARRIET THE SPY by Louise Fitzhugh

HOLES by Louis Sachar

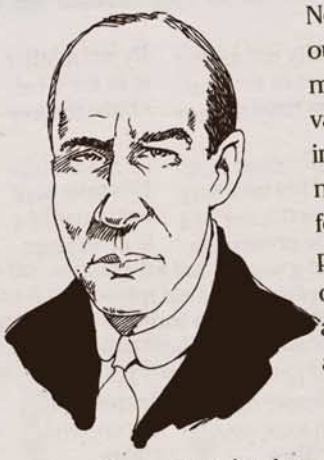
MANIAC MAGEE by Jerry Spinelli

RUBY LU, EMPRESS OF EVERYTHING

the weekly Standard

October 29, 2007

Up Front



Nobody covers Soviet Russia like our own Walter Duranty, whose measured style, progressive values, and high-level contacts in the Kremlin won him a much-deserved Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting, and praise from veteran students of the Soviet experiment such as actor Paul Robeson, lawyer-activist Alger Hiss, and the great Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw. So when the publicists for a disgruntled (perhaps envious?) British correspondent named Malcolm Muggeridge sent us his new book, *Winter in Moscow*, full of wild accusations about starvation and mass executions in the recent collectivization of the Ukraine, we asked Mr. Duranty to set the record straight. Which he does, with his customary authority and thoroughness, beginning on Page 10.

Meanwhile, a young writer of extraordinary power and range on the *Times* staff, Jayson Blair, makes his Book Review debut on Page 15. Blair, still in his twenties, combines a taut, sinewy prose style with imaginative flair, and couldn't wait to tear apart the "dangerous pretensions" and "historic falsehoods," as he calls them, of the controversial Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas's new memoir, *My Grandfather's Son*. "The past isn't dead," writes Blair. "It isn't even past." Writing with a rage and indignation born of years of experience and personal struggle,

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